



## Girl On the Run, Re-Worked by Rad\_pleasure\_babe

**Category:** IT (2017), IT - Stephen King

**Genre:** 80's Music, Abuse, Dark, Feminist Themes, Punk, Rape/Non-con Elements, Revenge, Substance Abuse

**Language:** English

**Characters:** Ben Hanscom, Beverly Marsh, Bill Denbrough, Bowers Gang, Eddie Kaspbrak, Henry Bowers, Mike Hanlon, Original Female Character(s), Patrick Hockstetter, Pennywise (IT), Reginald "Belch" Huggins, Richie Tozier, Stanley Uris, Victor Criss

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**Warnings:** Graphic Depictions Of Violence, Rape/Non-Con

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**Words:** 48,078

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**Summary:**

All Dana wanted was to be left alone. She was a private person; she kept a decent job, cherished her small apartment, and was pretty good at keeping her head down. That was before though...before kids in Derry started to disappear; before the constant fear and dread; before her nightmares took solid form; before she became local psycho Henry Bowers latest target...

# 1. Attitudes

## Author's Note:

Welcome to Chapter 1 of the revised, edited version of Girl on the Run. If you've read it in its first incarnation, you'll notice the differences from chapter to chapter. If this is your first time reading, welcome! Either way, thank you and I hope you like it.

I will be continuing to post one chapter a week. I'm using all original photos this time around to try and really get into the vibe of the story and make it more realistic :) I'll be continuing to use songs from 70's-80's female-fronted punk/alternative bands for each chapter title and will provide the artist information in the notes at the beginning of each chapter in case anyone wants to look into them.

Enjoy the ride babes ;)

## Summary for the Chapter:

*So you think it starts  
The day you're born  
Or you think it starts  
From being torn*

*It's just your attitude  
Not filled with gratitude  
It's only attitude...*

## Notes for the Chapter:

Chapter Song Title by The Brat

**The Brat - Attitudes**



1.

The Alley Cat was one of three bars in Derry Township. It wasn't much more than a hole in the wall, nestled just south of Town Square on the corner of 12th and Walnut. The building had stood since the 20's. It was a dim dive, old brick facade with a twelve-seat bar, amber and green glass hanging lights, and carpet that reeked with decades of second hand smoke. Crushed crimson velvet booths nestled in the back room behind the pool table. Tattered, stiff with dust. Above the bar counter hung a neon sign: a woman's hand with

long red fingernails and a gold bracelet clutching a long-stemmed rose, fingers poised gracefully. A short in the wire made it flicker, just barely. The kitchen around back was tiny—eight by eight feet—serving up all of six deep fried menu items that hardly anyone was brave enough to order.

An ornery old man named Ronald Kent owned the Alley Cat. He'd bought it back in 69' and had been pouring drinks there 6 days a week ever since, many of which went straight into his own mouth. In 87' his doctor diagnosed him with a bum liver and gave him two options: quit drinking or draw up a will. Ron was particular but he was cheap too. He didn't see the point in hiring two bartenders to do a job that he himself had managed single-handedly for years. Instead he looked for one ideal candidate: someone seasoned enough to do the job well but young enough to handle the 50-hour work week without keeling over. Someone "hungry" so to speak. He spent a few days asking around, poaching restaurants, talking to the regulars coherent enough to hold a conversation. Finally, he got a solid lead.

Her name was Dana Matthews. She was barely nineteen but he had been assured she could pour a drink stiffer than a corpse in no time flat. Ron didn't care much that she was underage. On the contrary it appealed to him, meant he could fudge the paper work and pay her under the table. Cops in Derry wouldn't care as long as she kept their glasses full. They had bigger fish to fry. And it didn't hurt that she was easy on the eyes to boot.

Ron trained her for three nights. By the fourth he felt comfortable leaving her on her own. After a month he'd stopped coming around at all. Between the new hire and his cook, Terry, the Alley Cat had all the staff it needed to run like a well-oiled machine.

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It was a slow Wednesday night and Dana was ready for it to be over. She always picked at herself when it was dead at work. Tonight she'd made herself bleed twice gouging at a hangnail on her thumb. She'd

made less than a dozen drinks in the past eight hours and half of them had been for the same guy. Those numbers were reflected in her tips. She looked at the jar on the counter. There were a few sad bills crumpled in it, dwarfed by the void of space around them. Her hourly salary of \$2.25 didn't exactly leave her flush with cash on its own. She needed those tips.

At first the downpour and flooding had kept people housebound; even Friday and Saturday nights crawled by with virtually no business. And just when things had started to let up outside the Denbrough boy had gone missing. Everyone was mortified and going out drinking seemed lewd considering the circumstances. True, the rain served as easy blame for the town's bleak aura. But it seemed unlikely to Dana that sun would bring much relief. An ambiguous sense of dread had begun to stir in her guts. She hadn't noticed its onset exactly couldn't pinpoint the origin of the feeling. The longer she sat with it the more urgently it gnawed at her, the harder it was for her to remember a time when it wasn't there.

Part of her enjoyed the quiet. She didn't miss yuppie idiots barking drink orders at her, straining their shrill voices to be heard over the music, snapping their fingers to get her attention. Nor did she miss the nightly onslaught of advances by drunk men, both young and old, single and married, shy and aggressive. But goddamnit she needed their money. Tips were the lifeblood of her income. Being the only female bartender in Derry gave her a leg up on the competition. That she was young, attractive, and heavily tattooed only increased her value. She was a spectacle, a novelty. Some men would come through just to gawk at her. Her dark hair hung just above her shoulders in short, messy layers. Thick, straight bangs framed strong eyebrows and large jade-colored eyes. Her skin was so pale she seemed to almost glow in the dimly lit bar. Sparse freckles peppered her cheeks and the bridge of her nose. Her lips were full and shapely and sly when she smiled. She was petite but far from frail. On the contrary, years of hauling pony kegs and walking eight miles a night behind the bar had toned her arms and legs, dimpled her back and shoulders with strong muscle. Her tattoos made folks curious more than anything else. Her least favorite inquiries included: 'Why would you do that to your beautiful body?' and 'Which one hurt the most?' and 'What's that one mean?' Sometimes she'd hear rumors whispered,

speculations offered up in explanation of them. That she was gay was a fairly popular theory. Unfortunately, it did little to dissuade male advances. That she worshipped the devil was another. Her favorite one, though, was that she was in a gang. It was never mentioned which Derry gang she supposedly belonged to, but it did provide Dana with a good laugh when Terry brought it up to her. For the most part she'd learned to ignore the looks and the questions and rumors. Her tattoos were for her, and her alone. She loved the way the pain of each session made it impossible for her thoughts to wander anywhere beyond the physicality of that moment, the freshness of the colors the day after, the way her skin puffed and scabbed, tending to them with precious care as they healed, the impact as the volume of images amassed on her body.

Tonight there was no one to gawk, and no one to bark orders, and no one to tip, and nothing to distract Dana from the feeling clung to her like an itchy, foreboding blanket. She checked her watch. It was almost three AM. Terry had already finished cleaning the flat top and changing the oil in the fryers as he did even on nights like tonight when no one had ordered anything. He emerged from the kitchen, tugging a sweatshirt over his long torso.

"You mind if I head out just a few minutes early tonight? It's me and Nancy's two year...I was gonna cook her a late dinner...or an early breakfast...depending on which way you look at it I guess."

Dana smiled. "Good for you guys. Yeah you go ahead. You want a drink before you take off?"

"Nah I got beers at home. I'll go out the back. You have a good night."

"See you tomorrow." Dana smiled again, chuckling under her breath. "Such an awkward man, God love him." She checked her watch again. "2:55..." she deliberated, then shrugged. "Fuck it." She lifted the gate and stepped out from behind the bar. No customers meant no prep or cleaning to be done for the next day. Everything was untouched. She headed towards the front door to flip the sign and shut off the lights. As she reached it she noticed a figure on the other side, a man. His face was obscured by the sign's glow. Her hand was already on the deadbolt when he spoke.

“Are you closed?” His voice was small. It sounded strained. Dana sighed and reluctantly opened the door just enough to get a look at him. He appeared to be in his early 40s, had pleasant features but they heavily weighted, drooping. His eyes were pink and the skin around them glistened. He wore a flannel shirt and paint stained blue jeans. “Are you closed?” he asked again, craning his neck a little to see inside.

“Just about,” Dana responded. “Oh.” His face slumped further. He turned to leave.

There was something so tragic about him, such a quiet, fatal sadness. It worried her. She had an idea of who this man might be and if she was right he could certainly use a drink. She opened the door wider and stepped out. “Hey, hold on. Kitchen’s closed; our cook went home for the night. But if you’re thirsty I can help you.”

His expression lightened a bit. “I’d appreciate it, very much.”

“I just gotta check your ID.”

“I look underage?” he asked, surprised.

“House rule says I gotta check everyone who looks under forty,” she lied.

He reached into his wallet and extracted his license. Dana’s eyes studied his name: Denbrough, Zackary, R. A long, prickly shiver washed over her. She’d known somehow: Zack Denbrough. His son, George, had been missing for nearly three weeks. She swallowed, trying to downplay her unease.

“Come on in.”

She opened the door and held it for him. As he walked past she got a whiff of whisky and cigarettes. He was a little wobbly on his feet. It probably wasn’t the best idea to serve him. Too late now though, he’d already seated himself on a bar stool, his boney shoulders slumped, his head bowed. Dana lifted the bar gate and stepped behind it.

“What can I get you?”



“Whisky soda bitters please.”

“You got a whisky preference?”

“No—not really.”

Dana reached for the well at first, then thought better of it. The guy was having a rough time of it, least she could do was upgrade him to a decent bourbon. She cruised the shelves until she found what she wanted, grabbed the bottle of Maker’s Mark and flipped its head into a shallow glass. As the liquor poured she packed the glass with ice, added bitters, and topped it with a shot of soda from the gun. When she set the drink in front of him his face brightened.

“Thanks.”

“No problem.”

He took a long sip and crunched some of the ice. His bloodshot eyes beamed vacantly into glass. “I’m not keeping you from something am I?” he asked. “Some one? At home?”

She filled a pint glass with water and slid it towards him but he didn’t notice. “No. It’s fine. Take your time.”

There was silence between them for a few minutes. Dana tried to busy herself wiping glasses and straightening stacks of bar napkins.

“You know it’s funny,” Zack said suddenly. “I used to stay out late like this drinking, when I was young. I didn’t have a wife waiting up for me. I didn’t have any—any kids. Used to think I was the luckiest guy in the world, no one to think of but myself—did whatever I wanted, whenever...” he took another sip.

Dana smiled curtly in response. “Oh yeah?”

“I don’t miss it though. Not a goddamn bit. Never did. My wife, my kids...my kids...” his jaw trembled. Dana winced. She wasn’t a comforting person by nature. She couldn’t bring herself to say what someone wanted to hear if it wasn’t true. She wasn’t a hugger. And truthfully she had no idea how to console a weeping stranger whose young son was missing and likely dead. Moving quickly, she raised

the bottle and topped off his drink with a generous splash of whisky and slide him a couple of napkins. It was all she could offer in the way of condolences. He gulped half the drink and released a deep breath. "I'm sorry. I don't normally do this, I shouldn't have."

"You're fine," Dana interrupted as gently as she could. "It happens. I wish I could do something for you..."

He stared at her through misty eyes. "You've done plenty, trust me." He raised his glass to her and finished the drink. "What do I owe you?"

Dana shook her head. "I got this one." He protested but she was firm. "I already settled the register. Don't worry, it's on me. It's ok." His eyes welled but he didn't argue. "I think you should head out now, Mr. Denbrough. It's late. Your wife's probably worried."

"Yeah. She probably is." He rose, a little shaky. Dana came from behind the bar to walk him out.

"You're not trying to drive are you?"

"Oh no," he answered dreamily. "I just sort of wandered here, I can wander home the same way."

As Dana turned the deadbolt Zack reached a shaky hand into his wallet and extracted a twenty-dollar bill. He folded it in half, and reached to take Dana's hand. "I can't—"

"Please," he said earnestly, holding the 20 towards her. "Please take it."

She sighed and accepted it. "Thanks. Take care of yourself, ok?"

When he'd gone Dana folded the bill into her pocket and rubbed the hand he'd touched against her jeans until it was chapped. She re-locked the door and turned off all the lights that weren't florescent. She turned up the radio and Fleetwood Mac crooned, echoing through the empty space. She made herself a Negroni, mixed a double shot of gin with Campari and sweet vermouth. It was her favorite drink: sleek ruby-red liquid, vaguely medicine tasting in a way that she liked. She only drank them at work, her ritual treat. She

sat in a booth with her feet propped on the bench and lit a cigarette. She tried not to smoke too much. It was hard though. She loved it, the way the cherry on the tip of her cigarette hissed and crackled when she took a drag. She'd made her drink strong tonight. Between the liquor and the buzz off of the tobacco Dana felt pleasantly light. She didn't always stay for a drink after close. But the night had ended on a heavy note and all she had at home was beer.

As she took another drag that grim, gnawing feeling resumed. When she was alone it was practically impossible to dodge. This was usually when it was the strongest, when work ended and she was winding down for the night. It would creep to the front of her consciousness and sit there; it would begin to make connections that didn't make sense, create patterns encompassing a broader spectrum of fears and worries, tethering them into one giant knot of awareness. Still ambiguous, but just strangely cohesive enough to make her wonder. It wasn't anxiety, exactly. Dana knew anxiety. It was concentrated to specific events and people. The triggers were predictable and she could avoid them for the most part. This fear was more abstract. For example, walking to her car after work never used to bother her. She didn't care that it was late and dark or that she was alone, didn't give it a second thought, until recently. These days she walked with her keys in her hand, startled by any sound, any movement. But when had the change taken place? She sipped her drink and tried to trace it. A month maybe? Or two? More like two. Had anything happened? No, not to her, not directly. But in town? She lit another cigarette, thought hard. Two months ago...what was it? What changed? What was different? The rain had come and George Denbrough had gone missing but that was only a few weeks ago. There was something before that. Something to prompt it...

The florescent hand flickered and shut off, jolting Dana from her thoughts. It came back on with a low buzz. She shivered, drawing her shoulders up to halt the eerie tickle climbing her neck. Shooting back the last sip of her drink, Dana slung her bag over her shoulder and went out the back, pushing in the lock on the handle as the door swung shut. Her Gremlin was parked in the back lot. She unlocked it and slid in, checking the back seat in the mirror and catching herself as she did it.

*Fucking irrational*, she thought bitterly. Still, she checked it again. She

waited for that uneasy feeling to dissipate. It didn't. Sighing, Dana plugged her key into the ignition. She wished the liquor store was still open.

## 2. I Wanna Go Home

### Summary for the Chapter:

*I wanna watch the TV all night*

*Perhaps a movie on channel 5*

*I might even call my parents*

*I wonder if they know I'm alive...*

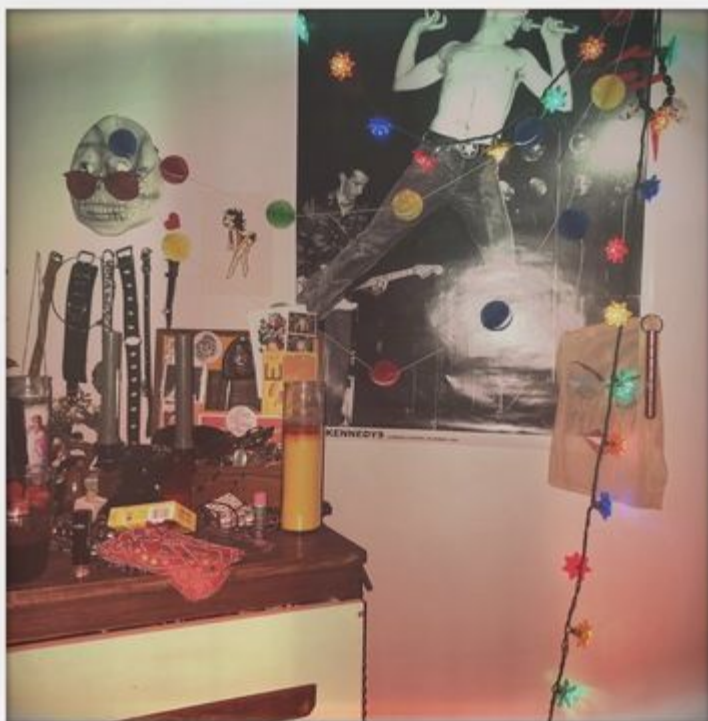
### Notes for the Chapter:

Chapter 2 you guys :)

Title song by Holly and the Italians

Enjoy :) <3

**I Wanna Go Home - Holly and the  
Italians**



2.

She lived on the west side of Derry in what was commonly referred to as “the poor side of town.” Her apartment complex was built in the 30’s, brick painted a dim, shady gray. It housed approximately thirty lodgers, standing three floors tall with a wrought iron staircase and matching balcony rails. Laid out like an old tenement building the apartment complex was sparse. There was no decoration or intentional landscaping of any kind. Stark, utilitarian architecture, solid foundation, and cheap rent were the only real selling points. It

was maintained just well enough to limbo under the bar of city housing inspection codes.

Dana lived on the third floor. Every night around 4 AM she'd face the daunting task of climbing the 60 steps to her door. She mostly felt bad for the other tenants. The iron stairs made it impossible not to hear every person that went up or down; feet hit with metallic claps and sent echoes spiraling out, rattling the frame. Even when she tried her best to be quiet she could hear the ghosts of her careful steps make the metal moan.

She got out of her car and headed for the stairs, her boots crunched the dry grass. The moon was clouded over. A thick darkness clung to every surface like hot tar. Derry was quiet tonight too. Dana had gotten accustomed to bar hours. She didn't sleep much anyway and liked the solitude that accompanied the schedule. But sometimes the quiet bothered her. It was like shell shock when the bar was busy, going from chaos to absolute stillness. When work was slow, like tonight, it almost felt like the quiet had followed her. Music helped. Dana wondered what album she would wind up putting on. As she neared the third floor she noticed a figure perched on the landing.

*Weird for someone to be up this late.*

Dana slowed her steps, straining her eyes through darkness. She was just a little thing, probably fourteen or fifteen. Her fiery hair fell around her face in soft curls. The girl wore an oversized t-shirt and green socks. She tucked her legs up inside the shirt and hugged them, rocking back and forth. She lived next door. Dana had seen her here and there in passing. Usually she got home from school around the time Dana left for work. She'd never spoken to the girl before but for her to be up at this hour was strange. When she reached her door Dana paused, turning back to the landing.

"You ok?"

The girl looked up. "Yeah," she said quickly. "I'm fine."

"You lock yourself out?"

"No." She bit at her lip.

"It's kinda late for you to be out isn't it?"

"It's summer," she answered coolly.

"Right." Dana slid her key into the lock and turned. "Do your thing then."

"I'm jonesing..." the girl blurted out.

Dana raised an eyebrow. "You're...?"

"I want a smoke..."

At this Dana smiled a little. She remembered sneaking smokes from her Dad's pockets when she was around that age. "I see. Kinda young for that aren't you?"

The girl shrugged, turned away, continued her rocking.

Digging into her purse Dana extracted a pack of cigarettes and a lighter. "I probably shouldn't enable you," she said, holding the pack out to her. "but whatever."

The girl twisted her legs free and scurried over. She reached for a cigarette, then stopped cold, jerking her hand away. "You gonna tell on me?"

"Who would I even tell?"

Satisfied by the answer the girl took a cigarette and the lighter Dana offered. She took a long drag deep into her lungs, didn't choke the way most kids do when they try a cigarette, clearly a seasoned smoker. Smoke streamed from her mouth and nostrils slow and deliberate.

"How come *you're* up so late?" she asked.

Dana lit her own cigarette. "I just got off work."

"Where do you work?"

"At a bar."



“Which one?”

Dana raised an eyebrow. “You go to a lot of bars?”

“My dad does,” she replied, taking another drag. She studied Dana curiously, taking in the ink on her arms. “I like your tattoos. What do they mean?”

“Mean? They don’t mean anything.” It was the truth.

“Did they hurt?”

She nodded. “They hurt.”

“Why’d you get them then? If they don’t even mean anything?”

Usually Dana wouldn’t even warrant this question with an answer. Occasionally, when she was feeling lenient she’d lie. Morally it didn’t bother her but when the words came out they clashed so violently with the truth that it almost made her laugh. She didn’t see any point in lying to this girl though. Coming from her the question was innocent, no agenda, no implications. “I guess I want people to think I’m tough.” She said it plainly. “That’s one reason.”

The girl mused on it as she sipped her cigarette. “What’s the other reason?”

“I think a big part of it is to convince myself that I’m tough. I mean, don’t get me wrong, I love the way they look. But there’s definitely more to it. I think there is with most people who get them.” It was strange to be so candid with a stranger, not to mention a kid.

“Does it work?”

“Kinda.” Dana rolled the cherry off her cigarette and tucked it back into the pack. Two fresh cigarettes she offered to the girl. “If anyone asks, you didn’t get these from me.”

“Got it,” she said. She took them eagerly, tucking them into the ankle of her sock. “Thanks. And thanks for not giving me shit, you know, for smoking.”

“It would be kinda hypocritical if I did. I’ll see you around.”

The girl put out her cigarette and flicked the butt off the balcony. She turned to Dana, flashing green-gray eyes and a small smile. There was something troubling in her stare, haunting almost. There was depth in her eyes Dana wasn’t prepared for, a sadness and wisdom that was startling to see in someone so young. “See you,” she said, crossing to her door.

Dana twisted her key in the deadbolt.

“Hey,” the girl called quietly. “What’s your name, neighbor?”

“Dana.”

“I’m Beverly—Bev. Thanks for the smokes.” She ducked inside with practiced silence.

That night Dana rolled a joint for the first time in months. She felt strange after her interaction with Beverly. Her tone, her mannerisms, that strange look in her eye, were just a little too familiar. She took a hit and the husky smoke snaked through her lungs and fogged her brain nicely.

*Music. I need music.*

She kept her records alphabetized and organized by genre. She’d built shelves for them. Tapes were mounted in cassette frames on the wall by the kitchen. In the three years she’d lived in the apartment she’d amassed quite the music collection. But as much as she loved to diversify and she always came back to punk music. Truthfully it was her lifeline. It was a genre that wasn’t always easy to find in a town like Derry, which made the sparse treasures she unearthed extremely satisfying. She’d found an original press X-RAY SPEX album at the summer flea for \$2, the entire Ramones discography at a garage sale, CRASS and SSD tapes from the Salvation Army. Tonight though, what she needed was something soft. Carefully, she prowled her selection, raking a finger across brittle record spines as she searched. She decided on Lou Reed, Transformer. She sank onto the couch and

listened to the pleasantly repetitive riffs.

*Vicious, you hit me with a flower  
You do it every hour  
Oh, baby you're so vicious  
Vicious, hey why don't you swallow razor blades  
You must think that I'm some kind of gay blade  
But baby, you're so vicious*

*Dreamy*, she thought, bringing the joint back to her lips.

The apartment was tiny but it was hers. The front door opened to the living room which doubled as a bedroom. It was just barely big enough for her to squeeze a twin bed in the corner and still have room for a coffee table and couch. She burned candles at night to save money on the electric bill, kept a tray of them on the coffee table and just kept piling new candles on top of the old wax.

The kitchen was on the right. It was small but she didn't do a lot of cooking. Black and white tile checkered the floor. The rest of the flooring was wood. The bathroom was at the end of the short hallway that led past the kitchen. Pretty much everything she owned was used but she'd managed to find a few gems, like her old Crosley record player, oak dresser, a couple Oriental area rugs. She'd put up shelves, hung posters and collages, framed a couple of paintings.

There had been a time in Dana's recent past when she would have given anything to have her own place, done anything. Truthfully, she nearly had. Sometimes smoking pot made sunken memories wash back up. It didn't matter how long they'd been buried or how hard she worked on a daily basis to forget. One way or another they always managed to drift back up to her awareness and hover there, floating...

A sharp noise jolted her back to the present, a shrill, squeaking sound. The pot had her disoriented. She couldn't tell if it had come from in her apartment or outside somewhere. It didn't sound like a person or an animal. More like material, like latex or rubber being squeezed. What followed was another noise, this one a faint, raspy giggle. Dana rose. Her bloodshot eyes scanned the apartment. Even high she knew it was too small for anyone to hide in; she could see the whole place from where she stood. She was alone. She eyed the

joint in her right hand, accusingly.

“This was not a good idea tonight,” she mumbled, stabbing it out in the ashtray. It was a bullshit excuse and she knew it. She’d smoked a hundred joints and never heard sounds that weren’t there...

### 3. Bite the Hand

#### Summary for the Chapter:

*You think you will win this duel  
But I'm as mean as you are cruel  
You say you have a heart like ice  
Well I'm gonna cut me off a slice...*

#### Notes for the Chapter:

Chapter 3

Chapter song is by the Reactors, linked below  
Hope you enjoy this chapter babes, I had fun <3

**THE REACTORS - World War Four  
(FULL)**



3.

Something changed on Thursday. The mourning veil over Derry was cast aside overnight. People were drinking as though another prohibition was on the horizon. Dana was drowning in them, a sea of screechy voices demanding another beer, a Manhattan, a pitcher of Margaritas, a round of shots. All around her fingers snapped, hands shot up, fluttering inches from her face to demand her attention. When they felt they'd been overlooked or not served quickly enough they rolled their eyes and muttered snide jabs under their breath just

loud enough for her to hear. Dana had to kick out half a dozen of them for getting too salty after she cut them off, starting fights, trying screw in the bathroom. She even caught one guy trying to do a line of coke right off the bar counter. That one was strange. This was Derry, after all.

Normally people trickled out slowly the last hour. A few would stay right up until the very end, nursing their drinks, buzzed and oblivious, until Dana physically told them that they had to go. Tonight was different. The whirlwind frenzy that filled the bar emptied it the same way. The town, seized by some mass party-hysteria, had come and gone as one entity, leaving a trail of destruction in its wake. Part of that was Dana's fault. She was a bit of a storm herself when it got busy, swirling bottles and glassware; her left hand rained long streams of liquor while her right shook cocktails frothy. Her dad had taught her. He threw a lot of parties when she was kid. Sometimes he'd get too faded to make drinks so he'd talk her through it. Even though he slurred he could always remember the recipes down to the ounce.

*"Like thiiss kiddo: you smack the gllaaassss down on top a' the jig at an anglllee. It makes a vacuum, sseeee? That way nothing can spill. And you can make two drinkksss a'the same time seeee? Cuz you only need one hand a'shake the fuckin' thing. S'like magic, right? Now you wanna help yer old man keep thiiss party goin' or whaa?"*

Dana shuddered. She shook her head to reset, physically dislodge the unwelcome thoughts. With no distractions those pesky memories came knocking. Always after close. She could have set her watch by it. She wanted a drink. A strong one.

She could hear Terry in the kitchen finishing up the last of the dishes, straining his voice to mimic ACDC on the radio. Dana still had a considerable amount of chaos behind the bar to clean up before she could think of leaving. Her feet were killing her, a deep, dull ache in each sole. She flipped the sign to 'closed' switching off the main lights. As she slipped back behind the bar a low sound curled into her ears. She heard it clearly in the emptiness around her: raspy little chuckle, same as she'd heard in her apartment the night before. She didn't have time to brace herself for the tremor that rattled her body. It started in the back of her throat like a sob, spreading

instantaneously to each nerve. Her muscles locked in spasm as it tingled all the way from the base of her spine to her jaw, her scalp, her fingertips.

Her eyes swept wildly over her surroundings. The bar was empty. Terry was still in the kitchen. And this time there was no joint to shoulder the blame. Only the knowledge that she had heard it, that it was there. She held her breath, ears poised, listening.

*POP!*

Dana recoiled as her heart lurched into her throat. Cautiously, she stepped out into the room. To the left of the kitchen a short hallway led to the bathrooms. That's where it came from. It was dark with only the hot glow of fluorescents cast on the entrance, and Dana felt drawn to it in a way she didn't like. Her palms sweat, pulse pounded in her eardrums. Everything else was silent. Still. She couldn't hear Terry singing, she couldn't hear her own footsteps as they led her, somehow without consent, down the hallway. The darkness thickened until all she could separate from it was the metallic sheen of the bathroom doorknob. She reached for it. All at once that bad, raw feeling flooded her. It was home. Sickening memories crawled to the forefront of her brain, melding into her fear and giving it fuel to burn through. Sweat pinpricked her skin, stinging her eyes, polluting her pores with cold panic.

*SCREEEEEEEECH! POP!*

It was on the other side of the door. And it was suddenly so clear what it was. Someone was raking tensed fingers over a balloon, squeezing it, making it scream. Her hand tightened around the doorknob. She wanted to tear it away, to run, to crawl under a table and cling to herself and scream until her voice gave out. Somehow she couldn't. The knob turned but it wasn't she who twisted it, it was whatever existed on the other side, whatever was making the sounds. She closed her eyes. She felt suspended, dangling, floating...

The front door swung open and hit the wall, hard. It was enough to jolt Dana back into herself. She jerked her hand away. Voices filled the bar behind her. Her heartbeat steadied. She backed out of the hallway, casting a last, troubled look at the door. As she she reentered the main room Dana was confronted with a new dilemma;



four of them, in fact.

They didn't seem to notice her as she stepped back behind the bar but she was able to get a good look at them. Two of them barely looked sixteen. She wasn't sure about the other two; they could have been eighteen or nineteen maybe but there was no way in hell any of them were old enough to drink. Clearly they'd found a way around that though. The stale stench of beer hung on them like cheap cologne. To think they stood a chance at getting served they'd have to be either very stupid or very drunk. *Or both*, she considered. Either way she was in no mood for it. Her blood warmed as she took on a familiar role. She tried to shake off the last remnants of the terror she'd felt moments ago.

Two of the boys were hanging on each other, a drunk human chain. One of them a big-boned kid with booze-flushed cheeks, brown hair, and a trucker hat; the other gangly and almost sickly pale, his bleached hair sweat-plastered to his forehead. The bigger boy was holding him up, trying to steady him.

"Imma let go now Vic," he said, taking his friend firmly by the shoulders. "You got this?"

"Got it," he said, drooling. Once released he immediately stumbled, tripped, and fell backwards onto the floor.

The boy with the hat bent to help him up while their associate doubled over, screeching with laughter. He was taller than the rest of them, lanky, with dark shaggy hair and a shit-eating grin that made his face look long and pointy like a coyote snout. The fourth boy, while clearly just as drunk from the way he swayed on his feet, was quiet. He was a little shorter than the other three and lean in a way that made him look older. He wore faded t-shirt with cut sleeves and light jeans littered with holes. His sandy blond hair was trimmed into a mullet. He rested his hand on the seat of a bar stool, spinning. His face placid as frozen lake.

"Hey," Dana said. They didn't hear her, preoccupied as they were. The big kid with the hat was trying to peel his friend off the ground and had fallen himself in the process, eliciting more hyena shrieks from the tall boy. The one with the mullet ignored them, transfixed by the bar stool spinning faster, and faster. "Hey," she said again,

loud enough to breach their hysterics. This time they looked at her.

“Can you guys read? We’re closed.”

“*Closed?*” The coyote boy staggered over to the bar and planted his elbows on it. “Closed...” he said again. He didn’t make eye contact. It was obvious where he was looking. When he grinned it looked like he had too many teeth for his mouth. “You don’t look closed,” he said, still ogling her chest. “you look like wide open to me.”

Dana rolled her eyes. “Hey,” she said. She extended her hand in front of him and snapped a few times before pointing to her face. “up here.” The boy’s eyes were bloodshot, glassy. His breath smelled like weed and gingivitis. “Pick your friend up and go home. I’m serious.”

“Oooooooooohhhh,” they mocked in unison.

“She’s serious Pat,” said the big kid with the hat. “See how serious she is?”

“Come onn babe, we just wanna couple a’ beers.” He stuck out his bottom lip and wined like a puppy dog. The other two snorted. The boy with the mullet had yet to look up from the bar seat. His hand smacked the leather more roughly with each pass.

Dana raised her eyebrows. “Are you fucking kidding? Are you *deaf?*”

Coyote boy leaned his head back and pouted. “Oh my gooddd it’s just a couple of beersss. We got money. You hafta be such a bitch?”

“Yeah,” the blond one piped up from the floor. “Why you gotta be a *bitch*, bitch?” They laughed. The big kid burped loudly. Sour stomach acid and PBR gas permeated the air. More laughter.

“Wow. This is sad,” Dana said, shaking her head in disbelief. “I mean I knew you guys were underage, that’s fucking obvious. But you must be like, literal children.”

“How old are you?” It was the boy with the mullet. He’d stopped spinning the seat. He rested his hand on it, tapping his thumb on the vinyl. He looked up at her. His eyes were light and cold, pupils wide from the alcohol in his blood. As he studied her the corners of his

mouth twitched into a strange expression. Not a smile exactly, but amused. "You 21? You don't look 21. You could be my age." His stroked the barstool lightly, tracing circles with his fingertips, scratching it.

It was rare for Dana to feel intimidated by anyone at her job. In the two years she'd worked at the Alley Cat she'd been groped, grabbed, cursed at, spit on, slapped, and shoved by men three times the size and strength of this mullet-headed twerp. And yet there was something about him that irked her past mere annoyance. She'd grown accustomed to being leered at, hassled, objectified. But this kid's gall was disarming. The way he looked at her...it startled her, almost hurt. Like a bee sting, a splinter.

She forced herself to look at him directly, rationalizing in her head *He's just a kid, he's a drunk, dumb kid. "I'm old enough to be in a bar. Unlike you."* She leaned over the counter slightly, narrowing her eyes. "Go. Home." She gestured at him with her hand, as though she swatting a fly away from her food.

Again the corner of his mouth twitched. His icy eyes danced with intrigue as he mirrored her, leaning forward over the counter. His fingers fondled the bar seat. Gently at first, then he raised his hand and slapped, dug his dirty nails into the leather, squeezed.

Terry emerged from the kitchen, apron in hand. His face was sterner than she'd ever seen. "Everything ok out here?"

The boy in the trucker hat pulled the blonde to his feet. Coyote boy slipped his hands into his pockets, shoulders drooping. They'd stopped smiling. The one with the mullet seemed less deterred by Terry's presence. Still he shied away from counter and took a couple steps back.

Terry was tall but flimsy as a toothpick and he didn't have a confrontational bone in his body. And yet she felt safer—undeniably safer—with him there. It was completely foreign to Dana to feel as though she needed a man's protection. And it infuriated her. She took a second to weigh her options. Terry stood, unimposing, at her side. The boys were quiet. They waited.

*Well...fuck this.*

Her next move was reckless but necessary if she wanted to reassert herself. She didn't know what it was about these particular boys that made her so uneasy but she refused to let anyone intimidate her in her place of work. She looked at Terry, smiled with feigned confidence. "You can go Terry," she said, voice steady. "I got this."

He hesitated. "You boys know we're closed?" he asked, raising an eyebrow.

"Terry," she said sharply. "I'm all good here. Go home."

"You sure?"

"Yeah."

"Alright..." Terry knew well enough not to argue with her. "I'll see you tomorrow...get home safe Dana."

"I will."

He left with some hesitancy. Dana heard the back door clap shut, lumbering footsteps fade out of earshot. Instantly her fear escalated. But she stood her ground, eyes fixed firm on the boy with the mullet. Slowly he began to pace in front of the bar, like a hungry dog waiting to be fed. "Think you're pretty tough, don't you?" he asked softly.

"What I *think* is that you've been asked to leave."

"Oh we'll go. Soon as we get what we came for." He approached again, planting himself back on the stool and gesturing at her arm. "Dana, right?" More statement than question. "I seen you around town," he went on. "Sure got a lot of tattoos. You must like pain." His eyes darted over her skin, studying: first her shoulders, her arms, then they down her torso, hips, the tops of her thighs. He leaned in, craned his neck to see further over the counter. It was a hot night and Dana had her t-shirt rolled and tied up. Her cut-offs were short and frayed. She felt vulnerable now, at the mercy of his hungry eyes. But she'd made her bed. Concession was not an option.

She swallowed. "Look kid—"

"I'm not a kid." There was anger in his voice.

“Look *sir*,” she said tauntingly. “clearly you're capable of finding booze on your own. And quite frankly, I don't give a shit if you drink. Just do it somewhere else.”

“We'd rather be here,” coyote boy hissed, joining his friend at the counter. “Keep you company. Right Henry?” he asked, nudging him with his elbow. “What time you get off?”

“Assuming you ever leave?”

He grinned, all too eager to answer. “Who's gonna get you off if we leave, huh baby?” Behind him his friends snickered. But not Henry. He seemed to be considering something, silently strategizing, his unblinking eyes bored through her like x rays.

“Shut up Pat,” he said suddenly. “She wants us outta here. Guess we're gonna have to take our drinks to go. Six pack'll do. Pabst. Make sure it's cold.” He dug two crumpled bills out of his pocket and tossed them across the counter.

Dana could feel her last scrap of patience burn away like beads of water in a hot skillet. Adrenaline was careening through her veins, oxygen consuming her lungs. Enough was enough. “You know what,” she said. “I was trying to save you the embarrassment but you're really starting to piss me off so fuck it. Let me make this crystal clear for you: you and your hillbilly friends aren't getting shit. Nothing. I'm not giving you beer. You're too young. You're drunk—and beyond that, you're an asshole. Now go the fuck home before I lose my patience.” Before any of them could respond she lifted the bar gate. She was prepared to brush past them, walk to the door, hold it open until they yielded. Unfortunately for her Henry had other plans. She didn't make it more than a step before he grabbed the gate, slamming it back down. He threw his weight into the bar full force, slapping his palms on the counter hard enough to make the glasses shake. Startled, Dana couldn't help but flinch. She recovered quickly, tried to regain her composure. But it was too late for that. Henry had caught a glimpse of the panic in her eyes. Cracks were beginning to form in Dana's hard-ass façade, and he could see them.

“Know what I think?” he asked. He snaked further towards her, glaring. “Think maybe if you got laid once in awhile you might not

be such a fucking cunt. Sometimes that's all it takes, one good fuck. Dike like you got a taste of the real thing, might even like it." Somehow he maintained his composure. But there was rage in his voice. The muscles in his arms twitched. All the boys wore somber faces now. All were silent. They advanced like a pack of wolves circling a fallen gazelle, and the gravity of the situation sounded off an alarm in Dana's head clear as day. It was hard to breathe. Fear buzzed mosquito circles around her brain until she was dizzy. But her anger resonated the same frequency. It didn't matter that she was scared, it didn't matter that the odds were stacked four to one against her. **No one** spoke to her like that. Carefully, she reached a hand out and groped for the soda gun, keeping her eyes on the boys. They surrounded her, spreading themselves around the counter with Henry smack dab in the middle. Her hand found the cord.

"Fine," she said, slowly pulling the gun closer. "If it's that big a deal, you can have a drink." She gave the cord one good yank and the soda gun slid into her hand.

"Here." In one quick movement she took aim and released a jet of soda directly into Henry's face. Shocked, he stumbled and the alcohol in his system did the rest. He fell backwards onto his ass, choking, sputtering, as his friends clambered to his aid. While they were preoccupied Dana snatched the phone and dialed. She hit the 'speaker' button, cranked the volume to MAX and held the receiver out in front of herself like a shield.

Henry had recovered for the most part. He was fighting to get to his feet, his face contorted in fury, not a shred of restraint. "YOU FUCKING WHORE!" he screamed, deep voice cracked with fury. "I'M GONNA FUCKING KILL YOU, YOU CUNT! YOU FUCKING BITCH! YOU ARE DEAD!" He lunged but his friends were quick to grab hold of him. He thrashed against them, bucking, snarling rabid.

"Henry!" The husky boy with the hat had him around the waist and was trying desperately to get his attention. "Henry stop! Look!" He pointed at the phone.

The operators voice sang through the receiver and Dana had never been so relieved to hear anything in her life. "9-1-1, what's your emergency?" Dana didn't say anything. She moved the phone to her ear and took the call off speaker, covering the microphone with her

hand. There she stood, eyes darting from one intruder to the next, waiting.

Apparently the prospect of police was enough to dissuade them. She watched as Henry jerked free from his friend's grip, wiping the last of the moisture from his face. He glared at Dana, rage quivering his jaw. Abruptly he turned on his haunches and stormed out, throwing the door open so hard it hit the window and cracked it. Trucker hat-boy trailed out after him, followed by the gangly blonde who barely managed to make it through the door without falling down again. Coyote boy was the last to go, turning back to Dana, puckering his lips and blowing her a snide kiss. 'Next time,' he mouthed, and backed out the door. They were gone. Dana stood behind the counter, trembling.

"Hello?" the operator said. "Do you need assistance?"

It took Dana a second to answer; her voice appeared to be lost somewhere.

"Do you need assistance?"

"No," she said. "No, I don't. I'm sorry I—misdialed." She crushed the phone into its dock and crossed the room to lock the door, hands shaking as she twisted the deadbolt. The tremors continued as she poured herself a shot of tequila and slung it back. It burned comfort from her throat down into her chest. She poured another. "What the fuck was that?" she said aloud. She'd had a hundred different confrontations with all manner of aggressive assholes and never truly feared for her safety. And to feel so genuinely threatened by high school kids was almost too bizarre to comprehend.

She sank back against the wall, drained. So much adrenaline had poured through her. Between dealing with those kids and whatever she'd heard in the bathroom.

*Fuck...I forgot about the fucking bathroom.*

She recalled the sound of screeching latex, the way she'd been sucked down the hallway, digested by darkness. She swallowed. It was dry. Her pulse had begun to race again. Just recalling that sound made

her want to drop everything and get the hell out of there. Then again that might not be the best idea either. She had to at least consider the possibility that those boys might be waiting for her. She'd certainly managed to royally piss off the one, Henry. The way he looked when she sprayed him: eyes bulging, face twisted into a snarl, screaming obscenities at the top of his lungs. He was entitled, delusional, psychotic even, but still just a kid. What she'd heard in the hall was far more disconcerting. The fear was like nothing she'd ever felt. She didn't want to be there if and when whatever lurked behind that door decided to make another appearance.

Mind made up, she downed her second shot and threw her bag over her shoulder. Terry kept a baseball bat by the kitchen entrance, just in case. Dana had always thought it was kind of funny, even gave him a hard time about it at first. But now she was grateful for it. It was heavy, reassuring in her hand. Much to her relief there was no one waiting for her when she stepped outside.

Her Gremlin was parked just a few feet away. More relief. The closer she got to it the more urgently she felt the need to get inside. She fumbled with the keys caught in the clutter of her bag, swearing under her breath. Finally she managed to get them untangled and the door opened. Once inside she immediately locked it, letting the excess oxygen rush from her lungs.

*Weirdest fucking' night*, she mused, gliding the key into the ignition.

She twisted the rearview mirror down a hair, just enough to see her blind spot. It was when she tilted it back that she saw them. Not two inches behind her, clear and lustrous as her own, hovered a pair eyes. They glowed feverish yellow through the surrounding dark, wet, glistening. She could hear heat sizzle from them, feel their fire on the back of her neck. The smell of sulfur and singed hair filled her nostrils.

Dana whirled around so fast she nearly gave herself whiplash. She scoured the the backseat, raked her fingers through the shadows. Nothing. She turned back, searched the mirror again. Her car was empty. But she could still smell it.



## 4. Never Say Never

### Summary for the Chapter:

*If time itself was his demeanor  
There'd be no sunlight or a glimmer  
Of sunlight landin' on the street  
Some say girls must be discreet  
Some say girls must be discreet...*

*Nursing their fathers locked inside  
They masqueraded as his bride  
I might like you better  
If we slept together  
I might like you better  
If we slept together...*

TW : drug use/drug-related death, sexual coercion/  
abuse

### Notes for the Chapter:

Chapter Title Song by Romeo Void

**Romeo Void -  
Never Say Never**



4.

At sixteen Dana found her dad's body after school, slouched over the kitchen table, foamy mouth leaking liquid, rubber chord wound tight around his forearm. The needle had fallen out on its own, a small pool of blood jelled around it on the table.

As there were no relatives to claim her, Dana spent the next two years pin-balling around foster homes. People with almost as little as she had would put her up in exchange for skimpy government

checks. But that's all she was to them: a source of income at the cost of their inconvenience. She graduated early and spent a while working odd jobs, cleaning gutters, mowing lawns. Occasionally there was part time work at Hanson's Diner bussing tables but the money wasn't great. All she wanted was her own place; no one to answer to but herself, no line for the bathroom, no need to squirrel away her money in the toes of her shoes to keep it from disappearing, no leering father figures or disturbed foster siblings. What she needed was \$325 for the security deposit and first month's rent on a little studio she'd found. She wasn't worried about furniture or food or utilities. Dana knew if she could just make enough to get her foot in the door she could figure the rest out.

She was a week shy of 18 and \$85 short. If she could get the money by her birthday she'd be golden: a legal adult with nothing standing between her and total autonomy. But she knew no amount of dishwashing and yard work would yield that that much cash as quickly as she needed it. And she wasn't about to tread water for another six months trying to save up, knowing full well that all her money could vanish in the mean time. No, Dana had an idea.

The night before her birthday she put on red lipstick and some fishnet tights she found in her current foster mother's dresser. She took one of her dresses too. It was a little big but looked ok. She walked down to the far south side of town. There was a motel at the end of Hampton Street called The Sea Breeze where she knew she could find what she was looking for. She'd never been with anyone before. But her body wasn't particularly precious to her and it seemed a small price to pay for independence.

When she showed up a few of the veteran girls gave her a hard time but she assured them it was a one-time thing, that she wouldn't be back. They eased off a bit but stayed wary of her. She got a room for \$25 and waited. Smoked and waited. Waited and smoked. Men came and went. "You wanna party?" she asked. "You wanna party?" The words felt stupid leaving her lips, clunky and cliché, not like when the other girls said it. She quickly came to realize that no one wanted to pay \$80, even for pretty jail bait, when they could pay \$50 or even \$20 to get their rocks off with someone a bit more seasoned. She watched women lead grinning men into their rooms with bizarre jealousy. At midnight she wished herself happy birthday and gave up.

As she turned to leave a woman approached her, scuffed heels click-clacking the cement.

“You need some help sweet pea?” she asked, cigarette lodged in her lips.

Dana nodded.

“How much you charging?”

Dana told her eighty dollars.

“Jesus girl. For them prices you better have Velcro between your legs and a set of solid gold titties.”

Dana shrugged.

“You need money real bad?”

She nodded.

“Tell you what. You hang out for a little while longer and I’ll see what kinda action I can cook up for ya. Name’s Didi by the way.” It didn’t take her long. Ten minutes later she returned. “I got you a good one honey,” she said triumphantly. “Passing through on his way to Portland. He’s willing to pay \$100 if he can put it in your ass. You give me \$20 up front and he’s all yours.”

Dana agreed.

The reality of what she’d signed up for didn’t dawn on her until she was alone with her customer behind the closed, latched door of her hotel room. It reeked of mold and stale cigarettes. The floral wallpaper was faded and flaking in spots. Little piles of asbestos snow dotted the carpet. He was in his late 40s, hairy, and smelled like pepperoni.

“I’m Jeff,” he said.

She told him she needed the money first and he held out a wad of bills. He put on a rubber. She got into bed. She expected it to hurt but when he entered her it was like an axe splitting wood. The first

couple minutes were excruciating. Then it got a little easier. She tried to turn off her brain to what was happening, focus on anything and everything else. The crumbs in the sheets, the smoky smell of the pillow cases, a spot on the wall where the paper split wide and something black had started to grow. She counted the daisies on the curtains and the cracks in the ceiling, but her eyes always drew her back to that spot on the wall. She could almost make out moving silhouettes in its dark center. It whispered and she strained to hear the voices inside.

She didn't know how long it went on but she knew when it was over. Jeff made noise like he was choking, then withdrew from her. She went to the bathroom and cleaned herself up, alarmed at first by the blood in the toilet but there wasn't very much. She was sliding the fishnets back on her legs, the wad of cash stashed safely in her bra. She'd done it. She was home free. She stood and looked around for her shoes. That's when she started to hear noises coming from outside, voices. Men's voices loud and low, women's voices, screeching, swearing. The sound of fists pounding wood. And then the pounding was on her door; hard, deliberate knocks that shook the chain on the latch. Jeff peered through the curtains.

"Oh shit," he said. More banging.

She was sitting on the bed when they came in. There were two of them, clad in gray uniforms, faces stern. They took Jeff away first, put handcuffs on him and threw him in the back of a squad car. They asked her how old she was.

She told them she was eighteen, today.

"Happy birthday," one of them said as he handcuffed her.

They led her to a car but were stopped by a third cop. His thin lips twitched. "I'll take her in," he said. His voice was like pumice on her eardrums.

He had her sit up front next to him.

"What's your name?" he asked, eyes on the road.

Dana, she told him.

“Dana,” he repeated. “Well Dana, you’ve really managed to screw yourself here. You see as of today you’re a legal adult. Which means you can be charged, as an adult, for prostitution and tax evasion. Legally there’s nothing stopping a federal court from charging you with those crimes. That’ll mean some hefty fines for you, maybe jail time.”

She swallowed.

“Or...”

Or?

He licked his lips. “Or you and me can work this out right here and now, just the two of us.”

She asked him what he meant.

He slowed to a stop, pulling into an empty parking lot. It was almost four AM and Derry’s streets were deserted. He fumbled for the handcuff keys on his belt. “I mean,” he began, taking one of her wrists in his dry hands. “that I’m willing put this whole matter to rest. You’re a young girl with your whole life ahead of you. I feel for you. I really do.” The handcuffs clicked and Dana rubbed her joints.

“I’ll forget all about this incident tonight. Even let you keep that money you got between your tits.”

Dana felt her ears redden and swell with heat.

“All you gotta do,” he put his arm around her, dry finger tips trailed lines on her shoulder. “is give me a little something in return.” With his left hand he undid his belt. Popped the button. Unzipped.

“I’m offering you a pass,” he continued, still swirling his fingers on her shoulder. “All I’m asking for is a little sample of what you’re selling. Now that’s fair, ain’t it?”

He didn’t wait for an answer, didn’t let her finish saying no. His hand dug in his pants and emerged with it. Bulbous, red, already hard. He

leaned into her, smelled her neck. “You know you are a looker. You got such a pretty mouth,” he whispered. Then his hand was on the back of her head, pushing, gentle but insistent. “That a girl,” he whispered. “That a girl.”

## 5. Young Girl

### Summary for the Chapter:

*My mama told me to be clean and behave  
I always listened or she'd slap me in the face  
I never swore, I never said no dirty words  
Didn't play with boys, 'cause mama said I'd get hurt...*

*When I was a young girl,  
When I was a young girl...*

### Notes for the Chapter:

Chapter Title Song by Sue Saad and the Next

More coming soon, promise. Thank you for reading,  
comments appreciated, always

xxxooo

**TOPPOP: Sue Saad & the Next -  
Young Girl**





5.

In her dream she's touching her father's hand and finding it cold and rubbery, like the formaldehyde frog belly she'd cut open in biology class. They were always warm, chapped and rough from years lathered in car grease, but warm. Fire in his blood, he'd say. She looks in his eyes: concentrated, almost ecstatic. But glazed over like a day-old doughnut. His soul patch is speckled with flecks of neon barf and dusty dandruff powders his eyebrows. When she pulls her fingers back they feel coated in his death. It isn't the first time she's wanted

to bleach away the stains of his touch.

She isn't looking at him anymore, but his overdose is a portrait burned inside her eyelids. She dreams her sight is a pinhole-sized tunnel, and all she can focus on is the spot on the wall where the paper is curling out like dry flower petals. She feels crumbs in the sheets sandwiching her. The comforter is starched but not clean. Her nipples hurt and her abdomen is all sharp shards and burning fire. She can feel everything but she cannot see it. All she sees is that spot on the wall where the paper peels back.

Now her eyes close. The smells are unfamiliar: old smoke, chemical cleaners, sour body yeast, summer road-kill. Frog-like thrusts rattle her, hips smashing into hers. It hurts in so many ways, triggering different pain responses all through her body. The wallpaper tears wider, baring itself to the fungus that invades it.

That same high chuckle echoes from a reality very far from where she is. It starts soft, tugging her back to consciousness bit by bit. But the sonic force of the laughter deepens, banging vibrations that knock loose pulp from the folds of the paper's sagging sore. The laughter grinds into her, mimicking the thrusts, clumsy bones clattering against her torso, crushing it. She knows it's a dream and that it can't hurt, not really. But the dream knows her too, and it doesn't care. It is mocking her, picking raw every memory like stubborn threads of meat that cling to bone; lunging, biting, sucking. She's trapped in the darkness, pinned under the past, shrill screeches echoing eternal around her while she floats...she floats...

---

Dana woke with a jerk so frantic she nearly fell out of bed. She sucked air into her lungs in gulps. It took a moment for her to recognize her surroundings. The darkness of her dream had been so vast. Part of her felt like she might still be in there, even as morning light streamed in through the blinds. She wiped sweat from her eyes and swallowed. Her throat was bone dry. Swinging her legs shakily over the side of the bed she stood and walked to the kitchen sink. She filled a jar with water and was just bringing it to her lips when a knock sounded at the front door. She glanced at her watch. 8:15 AM. She'd barely been asleep three hours. She peeked through the door's

diamond window. On the other side was the girl she'd shared cigarettes with a couple nights ago, her face wrought with anxiety. Dana threw a flannel shirt on over her tank top and opened the door.

"Hey." Her voice was hoarse. "Beverly right?"

"Yeah," she said.

"What can I do for you?"

Beverly eyed her nervously.

"Please tell me you didn't wake me up for a cigarette."

She shook her head.

Dana waited. "So...what's up? You ok?"

"I'm fine," Beverly said, still hesitating.

Annoyed, Dana narrowed her eyes at the girl. "I'm sorry do you need something or—"

"You drive that yellow hatchback right? The Gremlin?"

"Yeah," Dana said slowly. Dread pooled in her guts. "Why?"

Beverly winced a little and said, "I think—I think someone messed with it."

"What do you mean 'messed with it'?" A sick feeling told her she already knew. Her boots were by the door. She jammed her feet into them, mounting the stairs. Beverly's light steps were close behind. When she reached the second floor landing she peered over the railing, and got a glimpse of her car.

"ARE YOU FUCKING KIDDING ME?"

'DIE CUNT,' was the first thing she read. It was spray painted in sloppy black script across the hood. As she circled the frame more words revealed themselves. 'Fucking Whore,' was painted across the left side; 'Dike' marked the back. Half of the letters spilled over onto

the back windshield. The passenger side was littered with slurs: 'Slut,' 'Bitch,' 'Prick-tease.' Wide gashes were carved into the rubber flesh of each tire.

Dana tilted her head back until the sun blinded her and screamed at the top of her lungs, her rage-cracked voice drawing spectators to their windows. Her anger trickled into devastation. She stared at the remains of her desecrated car, trying hard to subdue the sob that throbbed in her sinuses.

The Gremlin was more than a vehicle to her. Its value far exceeded transportation. When she drove it she thought of her father. Not as he was when he died. That man was a vacant husk of a human. It was the drugs mostly that changed him, made him so hazy he couldn't tell night from day. It was this version of him that made Dana cringe, made her stomach clench up in knots as she'd try to pry loose the thoughts that stumbled into her brain. But there was a time before he drank so much, before he started using, when he was just her dad: kind and hilarious with a green thumb and brilliant mind for mechanics. It was her last summer with him—the real him—that they re-built the Gremlin from nothing but a rusted old skeleton. He was there for the whole pain-staking process, patiently guiding her through each step. And all the while he'd gloat to anyone who happened to be working at the garage that day: *"You guys see that? Fourteen years old and she's building her own damn car. I'm not hardly even lifting a finger to help. It's all her! Ain't my girl smart as a whip? Ain't she somethin'?"*

There'd been pride in his eyes when he handed her the keys, watched her slide through the freshly painted door, heard the engine purr to life for the first time. Now the last testament to a time when things with her dad had been good laid in ruin before her eyes. *All because I wouldn't serve him a fucking beer*, she thought bitterly. She vaguely remembered the faces of the boys she'd rejected in the bar last night. But their leader—Henry—his face was preserved with perfect clarity. She pictured him circling her car, paint can in hand, his mouth twitching up into that strange almost-smile as his friends took turns debasing it. It made her sick.

Beverly approached, timidly coming up to stand beside her. "Are you ok?" she asked.

Dana took a deep breath and exhaled. “Those fucking assholes.”

“You know who did this?”

“Yeah I know.”

“You should go to the police.”

Dana sighed.

“Well, are you gonna?”

“I don’t know,” she snapped, then said more gently “I have some issues with cops.”

“How come?”

“Because most of them are assholes.”

“Can I do anything?” Beverly asked.

Dana shrugged. “What’s done is done.” She looked down at her bare legs, feet wedged crookedly in her boots. It had only just dawned on her that she’d dashed outside in her underwear. She pulled the flannel up around her shoulders. “I should probably put clothes on at some point...”

“Right,” Beverly said. “Sorry again, about your car.”

Dana was quiet. She surveyed the damages again, a literal car wreck from which she could not look away. It wasn’t until she heard Beverly’s light steps on the fire escape that she snapped out of her stupor.

“Hey,” she called. Beverly turned around. “are you hungry?”

Dana didn’t cook much. Especially in the summer. Her body’s natural temperature tended to run warm anyway. Turning on the stove or oven in her tiny, un air-conditioned apartment made it that much worse. But with Beverly perched wide-eyed at the table, Dana felt obligated to put in at least a little more effort than cold pizza or cereal. Pancakes were easy to make; surprisingly she had all the

ingredients she needed. As Dana cooked Beverly wandered dreamily through her apartment, examining the cassette tapes and records, rusted zippo lighters, half-burned candles, old steamer chest. She handled each item with the care of an archeologist extracting fragile bones from the earth.

The pancakes were a little misshapen but thick and fluffy nonetheless. Dana set a stack of them down in front of Beverly. She made a plate for herself, then crossed back to grab a beer from the fridge, too exhausted to hide her alcoholism. She wasn't sure what happened to her bottle opener so she used a lighter to pop the cap off.

Beverly stared, amazed. "Can I have one of those?" she asked timidly.

"A beer?"

She nodded.

"You're too young. Eat."

Beverly frowned.

Rolling her eyes, Dana offered the bottle to the girl. "You can have a *sip* of mine. Just to taste it."

Beverly accepted the bottle and took a long gulp, then another, before handing it back.

"So much for a sip," Dana mumbled, swirling the depleted liquid.

"So," Beverly said, cutting into her pancakes. "What are you gonna do now? About your car?"

Dana shrugged. "Just move on, I guess. Pay to have it fixed."

"Well that's bullshit," Beverly blurted out.

Dana cocked her head, narrowing her eyes at the girl.

"I mean—well I mean it is. You said you already know who did it. You could just go to the police and tell them—"

“It’s not that simple.”

Beverly stared at her inquisitively. “Why not?”

“I have sort of a *complicated* history with Derry cops.”

“What happened?”

“I’m not gonna get into that. Sorry.”

Beverly seemed disappointed.

Dana’s fingers tensed around her fork. She was desperate to change the subject.

“So,” she began. “you live in the building long?”

“Awhile.”

“And you live with your...? Parents? Mom, dad?” She noticed Beverly wince ever so slightly, a darkness that passed over her face before she could shake it.

“Just my Dad,” she answered.

“What does he do?”

“Look I don’t wanna talk about my Dad, ok?” Beverly squirmed in the chair, as though she’d suddenly realized she was sitting on something uncomfortable. Her face flushed, her eyes shot down at her plate.

*Christ*, Dana thought. *I knew it*. The connection she’d felt with Beverly: Dana knew what shame looked like in a young girl’s eyes. She’d seen it every day in her own reflection. There were subtle hints that hovered, whispers audible only to those who shared the experience.

“You know I used to live with my dad too,” Dana said.

“You did?”

She nodded. “He died when I was sixteen.”

Beverly's eyes widened. "How?"

"He overdosed."

"Like, on drugs?"

"Yeah. He was using heroine," she went on. "He wasn't himself when he used it—not that it's an excuse. He did some shitty things to me towards the end. Some really shitty things."

Beverly stabbed at her plate.

"My point," Dana continued. "is that I know what it's like. Not that your dad is on drugs—well maybe he his—" She was tripping over her words now, trying hard to make her point without saying what she desperately wanted to avoid. She wasn't good at being sensitive, trying felt unnatural. "I guess—what I'm saying is that if you ever need—or want—someone to talk to...or if you're having a rough time —"

"I get it. Thanks."

Dana smiled weakly. "No problem."

Silence sat heavy between them. Dana drank her beer.

"How'd you know?" Beverly's voice was barely above a whisper. Her head hung so low her chin was practically in her chest.

"I think once you've been there you just kinda know. I wasn't trying to put you on the spot," she said quickly. "I just want you to know that I'm here. If you need anything I'm here."

"You don't even know me," Beverly said, lifting her head to look at her.

"Maybe not. But I've been where you are. I know how hard it is. You feel like it's this ugly secret that's eating you up—"

"From the inside out." Beverly finished.

"Yeah." Dana killed the rest of the beer, set the empty bottle softly



down on the table top. "Have you ever told anyone else?" she asked.

"My aunt once. Kinda."

"What'd she say?"

"She said that if I needed, I could stay with her. She lives out in Portland though."

"Do you ever think about going?"

"Sometimes."

"I mean, what's stopping you?"

Again Beverly looked down, scuffing her shoes against the legs of the table. "He's my dad..."

"That doesn't mean shit." Dana's voice rose. "You don't owe him anything, ok? Your dad is not exempt from treating you like a person just because you share blood—fuck that." Beverly looked startled. "I'm sorry," she backpedaled. "I'm not trying to tell you what to do. Just—it's no way to live. You deserve better. And if you want someone to go with you, to the cops I—"

"I thought you were afraid of cops," Beverly interrupted.

"I never said I was afraid. Besides, this is different."

"How? How is it different? If I deserve better, don't you? I mean you're just gonna let this asshole get away with what he did to your car?"

"A car is car. This is your life we're talking about."

Beverly shook her head, shrugging Dana's words off as she stood. "I have to go." She walked to the door and opened it. "Thanks for the pancakes." When Dana found her voice Beverly was gone. But her words did not go unheard: she was right and Dana knew it. How could she preach to this girl about self-preservation if she wasn't willing to right her own injustice?

*Fucking hypocrite.*

Dana went to the fridge, opened another beer. She didn't stand a chance sober.

*That's why they call it 'liquid courage' right?*

She tried to remember where she kept her bike pump. It was a good two miles to the police station. And she had no intention of walking.

## 6. A Pig is a Pig

### Summary for the Chapter:

*Your stinkin' lies are so lame  
Your stupid ideas are the same  
A pig is a pig and that's that  
You know who you are...*

*Your phony pose is so old  
You're just a product from the mold  
A pig is a pig and that's that  
You know who you are...*

### Notes for the Chapter:

Didn't change a whole lot about this one, just some of the word choices/cleaned up the grammar. Don't know how I didn't think of this song first time around. It's so fitting. By the Plastmatics.

**Pig Is A Pig**



6.

She stood outside the station. Pancakes and beer spun sour in her stomach as she stared down the square, brick building. Why was she here? What was she trying to prove by doing this? That she wasn't afraid? Or that if she was, she didn't care? She wanted justice for what those asshole kids did to her car, sure. At the very least she'd like to see them shell out the money for the repairs; a new paint job and four tires wouldn't be cheap. But was it worth it?

The station was only one floor but it loomed over her just the same. Dana was sweaty from riding her bike and probably hadn't had enough water. The hair on her neck prickled up like cactus needles.

*Maybe it'll be ok. Maybe they'll even help. Maybe he won't be here.*

Dana secured her bike to the rack and walked up the cement steps to the entrance. She took a deep breath of hot summer air and didn't release it until she was through the double doors. It was cramped inside with too many desks, all of which were empty. The ammonia floor cleaner made the whole place reek like urine. She approached the front desk where a woman sat reading a magazine, frizzy blonde hair wound into a bun on top of her head. She popped pink gum. Dana cleared her throat. The woman looked up, looked back down, popped her gum some more.

"Excuse me," Dana said.

She raised her eyebrow but didn't look up again. "Yes?"

"I'd like to talk to someone."

No response.

"About a crime?"

"What kinda crime?" she asked, uninterested. Another pop.

"Someone vandalized my car."

The woman perked up, leaned over in her chair. "Somebody smash it up?"

"Spray paint. And slashed my tires."

"Hmm." Obvious disappointment.

"So...can you get someone?"

She turned the page. "I'm kind of busy."

Dana sighed. "Yes, I see you're very busy with your Cosmopolitan."

But since you probably don't get paid to read about Julia Roberts, how about you put that aside for just a second and get someone on duty that I can talk to?"

She rolled her eyes. Dana grabbed the magazine from her hands before she could flip another page. The woman glared up at her, narrowing heavily lined eyes.

"Look," she said. "It's 12:30 and everyone's at lunch. You wanna wait knock yourself out." She snatched her Cosmo back and chewed grumpily.

"They're all at lunch? Every cop who works here is at lunch?"

"Or they're out on patrol or they're busy," she snapped.

"So if I had, like, an actual emergency right now what would I do? Who would I talk to?"

"You'd talk to me." The voice came from behind. It was deep, sand-papery. Like gravel crunching under a boot. Dana recognized it before she could stop herself. The woman behind the desk stood, eyes darting nervously. "Sheriff, this girl was wanting to talk to someone about her car. I told her-"

"I'll talk to her."

"I told her-"

"Marie," he cut her off again. "Why don't you make yourself useful, run down to Hansens' and get me a black coffee. I can't drink that Euro-pean trash you keep buyin'."

She crossed quickly from behind the desk, magazine clenched between her fingers. As she passed Dana the voice said "Leave that." She dropped the magazine without protest. "And spit out that gum. Someone calls the station might help if they could understand a damn word you said." She brought a hand to her mouth and ejected the gum into it as she left.

Dana stood with her back to him. She considered walking out. It's what she wanted to do, what every atom in her body urged her to do.

But leaving wouldn't get her car fixed; it wouldn't make those kids pay for their actions; it wouldn't make her feel like an adult who was capable of getting things done, even when they made her uncomfortable. So fighting every natural impulse, disregarding the urge to flee, Dana turned slowly and looked at him. His face had aged since their last encounter. Wrinkles creased deeper. His leathery skin drooped from his bones. He'd grown more of gut too. She didn't want to look into his eyes but she made herself do it anyway. They gleamed like lead marbles; shiny, dark. He studied her back, beetle-eyes rolling over her, sly hint of a smirk playing at his thin lips.

"Ain't seen your face in awhile. You look different," he snorted, gesturing lazily at her. "Changed your hair. Got a bunch of tattoos. Still pretty though, underneath all that," he added, racking his tongue across his teeth.

There was a sick flutter in her chest. "You gonna help me or what?"

"All business huh?" He crossed the room to one of the desks, grabbed a pad of paper. "So, what is it you need from Derry's finest?"

Dana moved too, careful to keep distance between them. "Someone fucked up my car."

"And by that you mean...?"

"They vandalized it. Some kids spray-painted it, slashed my tires."

He raised an eyebrow. "Some kids did this? Bunch of kindergarteners tear up your car?" He dug in the breast pocket of his uniform for a pen.

"High school kids," she continued, annoyed. "probably 17. Four of them."

"You got any reason why these kids would wanna 'fuck up' your vehicle?" She caught a hint mockery in his tone.

*Keep calm. He's fucking with you.* "They were drunk. They tried to come into my bar after hours. I told them to leave. Guess they didn't like that. They must've followed me home."

“*Your* bar?” More than a hint this time. “Or the bar where you *work*?” He’d given up on looking for a pen. He’d deemed her words unworthy of documenting. He’d begun to fill a cone cup with water from the cooler behind the desk. So nonchalant.

“Look, you know what I mean. I’m trying to report a crime. My car is wrecked, I want those kids to pay for the repairs.”

He took a sip of water and sighed. “Can you describe the kids?”

“Yes. There were four boys. Two skinny, one bigger kid, one with a blonde mullet.”

“A mullet?” he asked, though he said it more like a statement.

“Short in the front, long in the-”

“I know what a damn mullet is.” His arm jerked and a little water jumped over the lip of the cup. A vein in his forehead lurched forward.

Dana froze, eying him warily. “His name was Henry I think. I don’t know the others’ names.”

He snorted “You think?”

“Yeah. I think.”

He gulped the last of the water and crumpled the cup in his hand. “Let me ask you this,” he went on. “You actually see these boys vandalize your car? You see it happen?”

“No,” Dana paused. “But I’m sure it was them.”

“You’re sure? You’re sure. Well, if you’re sure.” He snickered, shook his head like he couldn’t believe what he was hearing.

A splash of anger spiked Dana’s blood. “Something funny?”

“You come down here, making accusations that have absolutely no factual basis, yeah, that’s funny. You didn’t see these boys spray-paint your car, how can you know it was them doing it? Unless you got



witnesses gonna back you up on your claims, what you got is a hunch. And that's all you got." He looked at her, upper lip curled back in a sneer, and shook his head again. "Tell me this: why would these boys wanna mess up your car anyway? You fighting over the same girl?"

She was so angry she was trembling. Her heartbeat slammed blood against its chambers, limbs tingled with numbness. "That's cute," she hissed. "but no, that's not why." She took a breath to steady herself. *Go slow, be clear. You got this.* "I told you: they came in drunk, asking for beer. I said no. I have a feeling they didn't like being told 'no' by a woman."

"Ha, a '*woman*,'" he mocked. "Is that right? Tell me something young lady," he said, changing the subject. "when you say 'vandalized' what exactly does that mean?"

"Like I said, spray paint."

"Mhmm. And what'd they do, hmm? They draw genitalia on your car? That it? Phallic symbols, stuff like that?" He'd started advancing, slowly so she wouldn't notice.

Dana swallowed. Her throat was dry like his voice. She eyed the door behind him. She could leave; she could still just leave. What would be gained by staying? But Dana's brain couldn't focus on anything beyond the words leaving her mouth, second by second.

"No."

"They write bad words then? What kinda words they write?"

"I'd rather not repeat it."

"You're accusing these boys of a crime I'm gonna need to know exactly what they wrote."

She tried inhaling, didn't get much air. "Die cunt. Bitch. Dike."

"*Whore?*" he asked, taking another step towards her. "Just a shot in the dark."

Now adrenaline was making her decisions for her. “You’re not gonna do anything are you?” she said bitterly. “You think this is funny. You know I actually came here for help? You’re just gonna give me shit. Hope you had fun. I gotta get to work.” She turned to leave. A hand shot out, catching her shoulder, dry finger tips digging into the flesh. He stepped in front of her, keeping his grip firm as their paths aligned. She waited for him to get mad but instead, he smiled. A big crooked smile, baring rusty teeth and tobacco chew gums.

“Gol-ly,” he chirped. “you sure said a *mouthful*.”

Bile leapt up Dana’s throat.

He raised an eyebrow, releasing her shoulder. “You been drinking today? I’m sure you’re aware that it’s illegal for a bartender to go to work drunk.” He had begun to circle her.

Dana glared at him. “I’m not drunk.”

“The hell you aren’t. I can smell the booze in your sweat. You drinkin’ last night too? How much you have? You drive home after? Ever think maybe you wrecked your own damn car and you were just too shit-faced to remember?”

The words seemed the wrong size and shape for her ears. “You’re not seriously implying that I vandalized my own car.”

“What I’m implying,” he continued. “is that people do crazy things when they’re drunk, maybe they don’t remember doing them. Or maybe they do. Maybe they do and they’re too goddamn embarrassed by their own recklessness so they feel they gotta pawn off their actions on someone else.”

“I wasn’t drunk,” Dana spat. “I wasn’t drunk!”

“But you *were* drinking.” He made chiding sounds with his tongue.

She had no response. She had nothing. She was dizzy, exhausted. He took a step closer. Too close.

“Now what am I gonna do with you? Hmm?” He returned his hand to her shoulder, gentler this time. “You know it breaks my heart to see a

young girl go down such a dark path.” His thumb stroked her gently through her t-shirt. “It truly does.” She couldn’t move. Her insides were on fire but her joints were locked so tense her muscles threatened to spasm. She felt the world around her crumble to ash as her consciousness soared from her body, a dead shell she could observe from above. His hand slid up her shoulder, hooking under her sleeve. It slid her bra strap aside, crawled in further. She hated him. She hated herself more.

The doors clanged open and Marie, tan and frizzy in her acid wash skirt walked into the office with a Styrofoam cup, no magazine, no gum.

“Here’s your coffee Sheriff.”

Dana fell back into herself and jerked her arm away. She said nothing else, nor did she wait for him to speak. She turned and left. She heard the door close. She felt sun on her head and the humidity as it seeped into her pores. She kept walking. Her bike was where she left it. Her hands trembled as she dug for the keys. *Sheriff Bowers*, she thought. *This time I’ll remember your fucking name.*

## 7. Guys Are Not Proud

### Summary for the Chapter:

*Guys are not proud  
They'll do it anytime  
Guys do not care  
They'll stick it anywhere...*

*Guys are disgusting  
There always lusting  
Guys are obscene  
Vile and Unclean...*

TW:  
ecalling of past assault/sexual trauma

### Notes for the Chapter:

Chapter title song by the Anemic Boyfriends.

I'm trying draw a clearer picture of Dana's father/  
their relationship this time around. Hope that comes  
across in this chapter. Enjoy :)

**The Anemic Boyfriends - Guys Are  
Not Proud**

[image]

7.

She bought a pack of cigarettes and smoked half of it on her way home, walking her bike by the handlebars. The shaking hadn't subsided but smoking helped. She mumbled as she walked, cursing under her breath. Cursing herself, cursing Derry. Her lungs burned and her throat felt raw. She kept smoking anyway. She stopped at the

liquor store on the corner near her apartment and bought a fifth of Jose Cuervo. She couldn't care less about taste, she wanted to be drunk. She wanted to be very drunk and sleep and not think about how her skin still itched where he had touched her, not think about how she *let* him touch her, let him talk to her like she was an incompetent child, stood still and mute while he advanced. She should have hit him, spat at him, screamed in his face, bared her teeth, barked, howled, threatened. Any reaction would have been better than stiffening like a mannequin, handing him the control. And what might have happened if Marie hadn't returned when she did? Well, it wasn't as if the thought hadn't crossed her mind. *Thank you Marie*, she thought, taking a drag so hard she coughed. Every second that tequila wasn't soaring through her bloodstream she was in agony. Her brain replayed the events of the station on nauseating loop. Liquor would quiet it. Liquor and sleep.

She didn't bother locking her bike. She shoved it into the bushes and let it topple onto its side. It wasn't until she approached the steps, paper bag in hand, cigarette clamped between her lips, that she noticed there was someone standing there, back leaned up against the brick. She did a double take and looked at them. It was a boy, thirteen or fourteen. His thick glasses made his brown eyes look gigantic, dark hair side swept his freckled forehead. He stared at her through those massive lenses, mouth ajar a little, eyebrows raised. Dana was in no mood to be gawked at.

"The fuck you staring at?"

"Nothing," he stammered.

Dana narrowed her eyes at him. "Good."

The sun shot sizzling beams of heat at the back of her neck as she climbed the stairs, iron rattling under her boots. She could hear voices coming from Beverly's apartment, shuffling footsteps nearing the door. It creaked open to reveal several more boys who all looked to be about the same age as the one she'd passed downstairs. They trudged out of the dim space and stopped abruptly upon seeing Dana. One of them carried a mop bucket, which he quickly tucked behind his back. Beverly emerged behind them. She looked flustered.

“Oh, hey,” she said, her face brightening.

Dana looked warily at the group.

“I stopped by earlier,” Beverly went on. “I knocked but you didn’t answer.”

“Wasn’t home,” Dana said, shoving her key in the lock and twisting. She turned the knob and pushed it open with her shoulder. “Boys,” she said, nodding at them. The door slammed behind her. She didn’t have the energy to feel guilty for being short with Beverly. She had nothing to say. She had nothing to give. The thought of working her shift made her want to throw up. *There’s no way in hell*, she thought. *Not tonight*. Tonight Dana didn’t care about money or obligation. Her priority was to silence the judgmental chorus screeching in her brain.

She picked up the receiver and dialed. Terry answered. “Dana? You gonna be here soon? S’posed to open up in half an hour...”

“I’m not gonna make it in tonight Terry,” she said as she picked at the plastic seal on the bottle of booze.

“You’re not coming in at all? Why?”

“I’m sick,” she lied.

“You don’t sound sick...what’s going on?”

“Look, I just can’t work tonight ok? It’s been a rough week. I just don’t have it in me. I need you to call Ron and let him know.”

The other end was quiet for awhile. Then Terry said, in the faintest, squeak of a voice, “He’s not gonna like that...”

Dana picked a butter knife out of the sink, jamming it through the plastic. Her head was swimming, each prolonged human interaction a threat to her sanity.

“Look,” she said. “For two years I’ve worked six days a week. I’ve never been late. I’ve never called in sick. I work weekends, holidays, I do the ordering, the inventory, maintenance, security. I account for half of his fucking staff. I’ve never asked for a raise, benefits, time off,

anything. So if Ron has a problem with me taking one unscheduled night off, tell him he can look for a new fucking bartender.”

She hung up before Terry could respond, yanking the phone chord out of its outlet. She poured herself two fingers of tequila and sank into the couch, cocooning herself in a blanket. The first glass didn't do much so she poured another and shot it down without hesitating. The half joint in the ashtray beckoned. She put on a record, Julie London, 'Lonely Girl.' Her soft, ghostly voice never failed to soothe. She lit the joint, rich smoke coiling through her lungs. Another glass, another hit. Slowly her angst began to fade into the fog. She listened to Julie sing as the sun cast shadows through her blinds, thin slivers that swayed and bent in the breeze. She kept the joint pressed between her fingers and closed her eyes. Somewhere in between awake and asleep, Dana started to see things.

It was her father that manifested first. Her father making drinks, working on cars, cooking breakfast, big goofy grin on his handsome face. He was helping her fix the Gremlin, showing her how to catch a snake without getting bitten, presenting her with a lopsided birthday cake lathered in chocolate and raspberries. He was throwing parties and drinking too much and falling down and chipping his front tooth on the floor and laughing as blood poured from his mashed mouth. And then his skin started to sink in around the eyes and he was always tired, always mumbling, always dropping his tools at work. He started having people over at the house all the time, weird people who were just as tired and sallow as himself. She'd found needles under the couch and in the kitchen trash, almost accidentally stepped on one once. And when she'd asked him about it he'd gotten angry, angrier than she'd ever seen him, eyes bulging, spit flying from his mouth as he shook her and screamed *“DON'T YOU EVER GO THROUGH MY STUFF, YOU HEAR ME? DON'T YOU EVER, EVER TOUCH MY STUFF!”* And later when she laid awake in bed, still trying to calm herself after his outburst, he'd come quietly into her room, and gently pushed her blankets aside. He laid his boney body next to hers, pulled her in close to him. His eyelids were too heavy to open and he reached for her blindly, too much junk in his system to realize what he was doing, or understand why he was doing it. *“I'm so lonely baby,”* he murmured into her neck. *“I'm so lonely. I just wanna feel close to someone. Just for a little bit ...”* It had been an

accident. That's what he said the next day, his eyes bleary with dread. And she knew he was telling the truth and that he was sorry. So, so sorry. But it didn't matter how sorry or how high or how ashamed. And he knew it too. A week later he was dead with a needle wilting out of his gray vein.

And then he was gone, long gone. And she was back in her hotel room at the Sea Breeze. She was smelling it, smelling Jeff, who paid her good money for her holes and tried to be gentle but failed. She recalled the pain with objective numbness, stared so intently at that black crevice in the wallpaper, its depth a puzzle she'd never solve. She heard the force of the fists on the cheap wood veneer, felt reverberation all through her bones. And the door swung open to reveal Sheriff Bowers on the other side, big man with leathery lips and low gut and dry hands. All alone with him, panicked and frozen as he spoke to her like a child, touched her like a woman, seemed to like it that way.

*Maybe all fathers are in love with their daughters, she mused, half conscious. Some are just better at hiding it.*

She saw Beverly's face, wise, grieving eyes. So young to be so sad. It was weird to feel protective of a stranger. There was dread there too; it was scary to care. She wasn't Beverly's blood. She could talk, she could make her pancakes and give her cigarettes. But she wasn't her sister; she wasn't her mother. What could she do that would actually help the kid? What had anyone done to help her when she was Beverly's age? Not that it mattered. After all this wasn't pain Olympics; there were no prizes to be won for enduring the most suffering. Would Beverly grow up bitter and traumatized, jaded by eighteen? Would she drink too much and have trouble sleeping? Would she be afraid all the time? Would she live in isolation with no friends and no family and no real purpose beyond just surviving from one day to the next, neck deep in depression? Did it have to be that way, a sick, inevitable cycle?

The joint had gone out. She melted deeper into the couch. A picture of the four kids from the bar danced into view. The leader, Henry. They must have known—*he* must have known that she wouldn't give them anything to drink. They saw the closed sign and still they came in. She couldn't keep from shivering, even wrapped in blanket. She



could see him so clearly, lean arms, stringy with young muscle, cold, probing eyes that dug straight through, made her feel naked and afraid. Sick little boys that would grow into sicker men.

Men. So many men. All of them sick, greedy. Even the “good ones,” the ones that seemed trustworthy. Terry for instance; for all she knew he went home after work every night and beat the shit out of his wife. She had no way of knowing. She had no way of knowing. She had no way of knowing. God she was afraid, so afraid all the time. She wasn’t tough. She wasn’t strong. Fear was the only real part of her existence, the only facet of her personality. She could pretend to be strong and get tattoos and shoot her mouth off and for what? Because she didn’t want them to see. Them. Them who? Her dead dad? Sheriff Bowers? A trashy teenager with a chip on his shoulder? She feared their judgment? Their wrath? No. Yes. Who? Who was it, really, that she feared? Maybe mostly herself, the inherent vulnerability of her sex. But there was another factor. Another piece of it. As she drifted off, her mind found a subject upon which to rest. Thoughts slowed to a crawl. The spinning room rocked her. She fell asleep and dreamed of the fear she couldn’t explain: the noises she’d heard, taught rubber screaming under pointy fingers, bone marrow-soft giggle, yellow eyes sizzling on a pale face. Eyes that knew her. Eyes that watched her. Hungry eyes.

## 8. Teenage Werewolf

### Summary for the Chapter:

*I had a teen-landmine*

*I had to blow my top*

*And under teen full moon*

*No one could make me stop*

*No one could make me stop...*

### Notes for the Chapter:

Brand new chapter. This one wasn't in the original draft, but I wanted add more of Henry's POV... kinda intense to write so it's a shorty. Hope you enjoy.

Chapter title by the Cramps, like I said before I don't like using riot girl stuff when I write from Henry's perspective. I try to use songs that are more fitting to his psycho ass. More chapters coming soon. Comments/kudos always appreciated.

**I Was A Teenage Werewolf  
(Remastered)**



8.

Henry stared, transfixed upon the steady rise and fall of her chest; gentle breaths guiding the air in, and out. He clung to the darkness for camouflage, shoulders hunched, muscles locked painful-tight, cigarette pinched between his fingers. He'd waited for what felt like an eternity to make sure she was asleep, then carefully climbed the stairs to her unit. Lucky for him she'd forgotten to close her blinds.

The inside wasn't how he'd pictured it; it was messier, more lived-in.

But there was something satisfying about the way she'd nested so completely, seemed to use every bit of space to her advantage. The furniture was old and offbeat. There were posters and fliers covering the walls for bands Henry had never heard of. Long, crudely built shelves lined with hundreds of tapes and records stood against the adjacent wall. Her empty bed was unmade, exposing light green sheets and a gray and yellow Afghan blanket.

*What a fuckin' dump.*

His eyes narrowed as they studied his subject with fascination, pale and petite and blind to his presence. She'd fallen asleep on the couch, curled on her side, covers swaddled up under her chin. The top of her left shoulder was just barely exposed, as was her left foot. Henry squinted to try and make out the color of her nail polish, but it was too dark.

*Red I bet, or black...fuckin' whore...*

Her expression was peaceful: eyes still beneath closed lids, plump lips parted ever-so-slightly. A candle burned a low flame on the table in front of her. Henry glared through the screen, each spiteful thought fostering more fire in his brain.

*Dumb bitch is gonna burn the place to the ground' she ain't careful...*

But even the most concentrated animosity couldn't alter the reality of the situation: he was mesmerized. Henry had never seen anyone—anything—so completely captivating. This girl had more tattoos than the gnarly old bikers that passed through town, a face like a doll, hair like Joan Jett, and a body so perfectly sculpted it almost hurt to look at. The way she carried herself was totally different from the girls he'd been with. They were inexperienced, easy lays for the most part. The ones that welcomed his advances usually had something to prove, desperate to piss off their parents or make an ex-boyfriend writhe with jealousy. The few that hesitated were easily overpowered; they knew better than to put up much of a fight. In the end Henry Bowers got what he wanted. Everyone knew that. Often he had to take it by force but it didn't make much difference to him. Truth be told he enjoyed a challenge. This girl was an exception. Here was someone wild, someone who could hold his interest beyond

a couple of “dates” in the back seat of the Trans Am or the Paramount Theater bathroom. And yet she was utterly unattainable, even to him. Maybe it was because she was older, seemed to have her shit together. Or because she didn’t buckle under his intimidation tactics. Maybe it was because she was so goddamn beautiful.

*Maybe it’s because she’s a stupid fucking cunt who doesn’t know who the fuck she’s dealing with,* he thought, anger bubbling in his guts. It was an anger he didn’t recognize, the anger of being denied something he wanted, something he felt entitled to. And he could be angry and ruminate and stare daggers all he liked. But the truth was he would have given anything for an invitation to that puny apartment.

He pictured himself sprawled on the couch next to her, head resting in her lap, breathing in the musky perfume of cigarettes and summer sweat on her skin. She would play him her records, maybe make a mixtape of songs she thought he’d like. She’d buy beer for him and his friends, roll them perfect joints with her long, graceful fingers. He would come by the bar after close, her face brightening when he tapped on the glass to announce himself. She’d let him in, feed him shots of whisky. The guys would be so jealous, stuck sucking face with high school girls, and he’d have her: perfect tits, pouty lips, ivory skin, tight, round ass. She’d fuck him whenever, wherever, her pussy a fountain of sweet nectar that would never run dry...

Instead though, he sat outside in the dark, pawing through the window like a cat left out in the rain. His eyes cinched on her still figure.

*Dana.*

The crotch of his jeans had begun to tighten and he reached a hand down to stroke himself through the denim. He continued to rub, discarding all hypotheticals into the ether. Desire and hatred blurred in his brain as he tugged at his erection, sharp breaths forced from his flared nostrils.

*This ain’t over. I ain’t even scratched the surface yet. Not by a mile. That job we did on your shitheap car’s just the tip of the fuckin’ iceberg. Mark my words bitch, I’m gonna make you sorry you ever fucked with me. Yeah you’re gonna be real, real sorry.*

## 9. Dark Rooms

### Summary for the Chapter:

*It's in that nighttime world  
so changed from the day  
where feelings were born  
in blood and sweat and pain...*

*Where children lay,  
in huge beds,  
in dark rooms,  
with shut doors...*

### Notes for the Chapter:

Sorry it's been awhile. This chapter was tough to edit. I'm already working on editing the next two so they should be posted by the end of next week. Thanks for reading xxooo  
Chapter title song by DA!

(I suggest reading this chapter in the dark for maximum chills)

**DA! Dark Rooms (1981)**



9.

Dana woke to a sound she didn't like. A squeaky, slipping sound. She jerked forward, propping herself up on both elbows. Her tired eyes darted to catch the black shape skittering down down the hall towards the bathroom. It was darker than the dark surrounding it. She swung her legs over the couch, cold wood shocking the soles of her feet. She heard the sound faintly again and the bathroom door slammed with enough force to shake an empty bottle off the table.

Dana's pulse struck urgently at her throat. She leaned forward, squinting through the shadows at the front door. Still locked, deadbolt fastened, chain securely in place. The windows were as she left them: open an inch or two, glass panes and screens in tact. The sound came again, this time rattling the shared wall between the bathroom and kitchen. She froze. It made no sense but there was no denying that someone was inside the apartment with her, and she had no idea how they'd gotten in.

She thought about running but stopped herself; she knew—just *knew*—that it wasn't an option. Breathing hard, Dana crossed to the kitchen. She extracted a knife from the drawer and started for the bathroom. Her steps were silent, her ears poised for sound. The weight of the knife steadied her hand. She reached the door, turning her head to put her ear against the wood. She listened, heard nothing. With her left hand she gripped the doorknob, her right brought the knife up to strike. She held her breath, and pushed. The door swung open and she advanced, flailing the knife blindly out into the darkness. When it didn't collide with anything she groped for the light switch, flicked it on, scanned the bathroom. Her eyes fixed on the shower. Aiming her weapon, she reached, took hold of the curtain and yanked it aside. Empty.

Now she shook so violently she was afraid the tremors might force the knife from her hand. She set it down, leaning forward over the sink. She splashed her face with cool water, rubbed the remnants of sleep from her eyes.

*I'm fucking losing it*, she thought. She reached for a towel. As her hand met the fabric something stung her. It burned; a thin ribbon of smoke sizzled from the welt in her flesh, not much bigger than the head of a pin. Then another welt, then another as dark liquid dotted her hand.

"What the hell..."

Tiny droplets pattered down from the ceiling, viscous like saliva. She suddenly felt colder than she ever had. The blood passing through her veins petrified, goose bumps spiked high peaks on her bare limbs. It was as if she'd stepped down on a patch of thin ice, plunging into the depths of frigid water beneath. She raised her head, and looked up.



The thing on the ceiling was gummy and black like fresh tar. Its skin was so sleek Dana could see her terrified face reflected in its torso. Its head was coated by the same wet, plastic skin, zipper mouth gaped open, raining down beads of black acid drool. No ears or nose, just two wide, empty eye sockets, hollow wells of immeasurable black. Spindly arms and legs clung by long pointed fingers and knuckled toes. As it writhed it left moldy smudges against the white popcorn plaster. It gurgled, sick laughter rasped from its jaws, a choir of a thousand dying voices; children's voices.

Dana was frozen. Her eyes welled with tears. The creature pried a twitching hand from the ceiling. Back arching it reared, spewing a thick stream of acid. She dodged it, just barely. The goop blasted the wall, curling paint and paper and singeing the plaster beneath. Dana began to back towards the doorway. Sudden movements were too risky, she was afraid to turn her back, to take her eyes off it even for a second. If she could just get to the door...

As though it could read her mind, the thing tumbled down the wall, flailing limbs tangling as it rolled. Her terrified paralysis lifted and she turned, sprinting as fast as she could down the hallway. Its movements were a cacophony of clattering bones and rasping, bile-choked croaks behind her. She made it to the front door, grasped the chain in its latch, yanking it free. But the thing was too quick; its sharp hand clamped around her ankle, wrenching her backwards. Dana's ribs hit the floor first, followed by her chin. Her palms slapped down hard on the boards, trickling hot pain down her fingertips.

Eagerly, it scuttled forward. The gum of its gooey membrane smashed up against her skin as it flipped her on her back, mounting her. Sharp knees squeezed into her sides, long, peaked fingers clamped her wrists together, forcing them up high. It lowered its bald head to hers, craning its neck. Dana tried to scream but she couldn't get enough air in her lungs. Squawking, the creature slapped its free hand against her mouth, jammed wriggling fingers between her teeth until she choked. It tasted like ash, like infection. She could smell the rotten spores growing deep in its empty eyes as it leaned further over her, dropping the weight of its body onto her chest. It unfurled a pale, sore-laced tongue and licked. Sandpaper taste buds scraped the skin on her cheek raw. She bit the hand plastered over her mouth but

the thing just grinned, its zippered mouth folding in on itself.

*“Velcro between your legs,”* it croaked in her ear.

Dana’s eyes bulged. It was her dream, the same dizzying sensation brought to flesh. The thing crushing her was a stranger but it *knew* her, had garnered an awareness of her past’s most intimate traumas, and it was delighting in exploiting them. It threw back its shiny head, belting hard, wheezy laughter.

As its weight shifted on her, Dana managed to tug her legs free. Pulling them back to her chest she kicked the thing with all her might, sending it sprawling backwards. Its fingers snapped off as easy as dead teeth pulled at the root. Gagging, she spat the dismembered digits and ink blood from her mouth. They were still wriggling when they hit the floor.

The gimp creature thrashed, spindly limbs flailing like a beetle stuck on its back, jerking its head from side to side. Dana scrambled to her feet, hands fumbling with the slick metal of the chain lock. She whipped her head back to see how close it was. But when she turned all that greeted her was an empty room. There were black smears on the ground where it had bled and the floorboards were singed, but the creature was gone. In its place hovered one red balloon with a white ribbon tail. It wasn’t tethered to anything and yet it was stationary; neither helium nor gravity appeared to impact it.

Dana’s heartbeat was still pounding away in her eardrums, making them ring. It was all she could hear, all she could feel—the vibrations from the ringing. The air felt thick around her, muffling sound, slowing her movements. She made her way towards the balloon; suspended, impossibly still. With no warning, it popped. That same moment her ears stopped ringing, as though some invisible conductor had given signal with his baton.

It took her a second to notice that when the balloon popped something had fallen out of it. A soggy pile of white lay on the floor, scattered with remnants of red rubber. She stepped forward timidly, kneeling to get a better look. She wished she hadn’t. Condoms. Clammy, yellowed with use. They smelled like old pennies. She gagged. Her knees gave, legs like jelly. And then she was on the floor,

back against the wall, hugging herself.

*Velcro between your legs...*

An intruder was possible. But not this intruder. How it looked, how it moved—the way it knew things that it couldn't, things she'd never told another living soul—that she'd vowed to take to her grave. The terror extended beyond the words themselves. Everything about that thing was wrong, but so *perfectly* wrong. It was as if someone had designed it *for her*, tailored it to her past. *Her* fear. *Her* shame. It couldn't exist. And yet here was the proof: the oily trails on the floor boards, singed spots where it's slime had burned through. She touched the tender skin on her cheek bone and winced. It burned.

A knock rattled at the door. Cursing under her breath, Dana stood up. She peered out through the diamond window. A wide-eyed Beverly stood on the other side. Relieved, Dana cracked the door and slid outside, shivering in spite of the humidity.

"Hey," she said, trying to sound normal and forgetting how.

"I heard weird noises," Beverly said, a hint of nervousness in her voice. "Are you ok?"

Dana stared dumbly at her. She opened her mouth to speak, closed it.

Beverly looked at her warily. "What's going on in there?" She craned her neck, attempting to peer over Dana's shoulder.

"N-nothing. Nothing's going on—I was asleep."

Beverly squinted. "You were asleep?"

"Yeah I was asleep," Dana answered. Her tone sounded more defensive than she'd meant.

"If you were asleep what was making those noises?" she asked, mirroring Dana's sass.

Dana narrowed her eyes at the girl. "Music."

"Music? That didn't sound like music..."

Dana swallowed. "Yeah well, that's Black Metal for you." She tried to smile and regretted it. As her lips curved up she could feel how manic she must look. Beverly's expression shifted from one of skepticism to grave concern.

"Did you see something?" she asked.

Her heart sank. She swallowed, picked at a hangnail. "Did I *see* something?" She repeated it back. "Like what do you mean?"

"You tell me."

Again, Dana stared blankly. The adrenaline was dissolving. Her brain was having a hard time processing the words, the absurdity of the situation. She was drained and confused and afraid. And what she wanted more than anything was to tell the young girl standing in front of her all of it, because there was no one else she *could* tell. But it was wrong. Beverly was too young to be her sounding board. Mature, sure. Intuitive, sure. But regardless, she was a kid. And it wasn't right to involve her in whatever had just happened.

"I thought I did tell you," Dana said. "I was listening to music. Sorry if it woke you up. I'll turn it down." Quickly, she made for the door.

"Why are you lying to me?"

Dana stopped. She turned back. "*Excuse me?*"

Beverly's stance was wide, hands on her hips, head cocked defiantly. "Why are you lying?" She repeated the question. Her eyebrows collapsed together in an arch, lips stretched taught, as though she had more to say but was waiting for Dana to go first.

Her expression tugged at Dana. The urge to spill it all was overwhelming. But she wouldn't go there. She couldn't. If Beverly was looking for kinship she'd have to find it in someone else. If lying didn't dissuade her, maybe anger would.

"You know you've got some nerve," she started. "Who the fuck are you to accuse me of lying? You don't even know me." Her hand clutched for the doorknob. She tried to focus on finding it, ignore the hurt that was clouding Beverly's face. "Look...you wanna bum a

cigarette I got you. You need help with your dad, I'm here. But don't come knocking on my door making accusations. I don't owe you anything. We're not friends, we're neighbors. I'll try to keep it down." With those words she turned and ducked inside, closing the door firmly.

"Fuck," she breathed.

Guilt flooded her immediately. But there was no time to dwell on it. Her eyes barely had time to register the room around her before she realized something was wrong. The apartment was not as she'd left it. The burned spots on the floors were good as new. The pile of wilted condoms had vanished. There were not scraps of red rubber balloon, no trails of sludge. She rushed down the hallway to the bathroom, slapping the door open and aiming her eyes at the ceiling. The plaster was spotless. There was no ruin from the creature's toxic vomit on the wall; nothing was scorched or damaged. Angry, Dana stormed back into the living room, hopeful somehow that the madness would resume where she'd left it, that there would be proof, that she'd be validated at least by the aftermath of the horror she'd endured. But there was nothing. All was pristine.

She stood in the center of the living room for quite some time, paralyzed by uncertainty. She knew what she'd seen. There were no blurry details, nothing vague about it. She could picture the gimp-like creature with keen clarity, hear its voice gurgling in her eardrums, feel the tack of its skin against her own. She could see the ruin left in its wake, the stationary balloon, used condoms like a mound of twisted, wet worms. And yet as she surveyed her surroundings for a second, third, fourth time, the notion that any of it had actually happened grew more ridiculous. The present was infecting the past. The past mocked the present. Her head ached.

Dana walked to the kitchen, opened the fridge and extracted a bottle of beer. She situated herself on the couch, legs folded crisscross. She opened the beer and drank half its contents in quick gulps. She needed a buzz if she wanted to sleep tonight, and if she wanted to process the horrific ideas swarming her brain.

*It felt real. So real. But what if it wasn't?*

She didn't know anything about her family's history. Her mother and mother's side of the family were a total and utter mystery. Her dad refused disclose any information about her. He hadn't any pictures or any other means of remembrance. Eventually she got tired of asking and gave up. Was it possible that there was mental illness there? A strand of sickness in the DNA that now plagued her own? Sure, in theory. And then she thought of her father himself. He'd started talking to himself shortly before he ODed. She'd thought it was the drugs in his system making him mumble. But what if it was something else? Something far more sinister that lurked within him, brought bubbling to the surface with the prolonged use of opioids. It could have been. She herself had been drinking more lately, smoking more weed. Maybe that alone was enough to trigger something; the introduction of foreign chemicals into an unsuspecting bloodstream. Maybe the expiration date on her sanity had passed, leaving her brain to rot away inside her skull. She took another sip, and thought.

*Well, shit...if I'm crazy then that's it. I'll probably just get crazier until I can't take it anymore and kill myself. I don't have insurance. Can't do therapy. I'd rather die than spend the rest of my life in a psych ward anyway. So I guess that would be the end of it...*

She finished the beer, rubbed the glass with her thumb. Her eyes narrowed at the spot on the floor where the creature had jumped her. She pictured its hollow eyes, the putrid puffs of breath that spilled from its zippered lips as it laughed and mocked her. And a far more horrifying thought pierced through the logic.

*If I'm not crazy...then what the fuck was that thing? And how did it know me?*

## 10. Pretend You're Not Crazy

### Summary for the Chapter:

*stop looking for the answers; you dont have the questions  
cant seem to find what youre after cause youre looking  
in the wrong direction  
look around take a look inside yourself; i know it aint  
easy  
but if you dont act soon theyll put you in a rubber room  
come on baby wont you please pretend youre not crazy*

### Notes for the Chapter:

chapter song by Phobia, enjoy :)

**Phobia - Pretend You're Not Crazy**



10.

The next day passed dryly. Dana stayed sharp, monitoring herself for any possible lapses in her sanity. She flushed her weed but couldn't bring herself to dump all the alcohol she had in the apartment. She ditched all but the tequila, tucking it into the way-back of the cabinet under the kitchen sink.

She went to work. She made drinks for thirsty people. She apologized to Terry for unloading on him on the phone. He shrugged, long limbs flailing. "Ron closed," he said. "Kinda nice to have an extra night off." His dopey smile was reassuring.



She skipped her customary post-work Negroni but it was hard. Bottles of gin and Campari beckoned her agonizingly from atop their posts. Sweet vermouth glittered like topaz under the neon sign's rose glow. She biked home. The night air was cooler than it had been. It felt good as it rushed past her face.

Back at the complex, she paused briefly in front of Beverly's door. She'd been hard on her last night, a hardness bordering on cruelty. She didn't want to lose her trust, wanted her to feel safe coming to her if things with her dad were to escalate. But she needed to keep a safe distance too. She remembered the hurt look on Beverly's face, how coldly she'd dismissed her. Now guilt pecked at her conscience.

Inside her apartment Dana's anxiety rose. Flashes of the gimp creature crowded her mind. Her ears were hot with the thud of her quickening pulse. She did a cursory sweep of things, checked the walls and ceiling in the bathroom, behind the couch, under the bed. It felt childish, 'checking for monsters.' Maybe she was regressing. She wanted a drink bad but ignored the craving. Instead she decided to focus on making a peace offering for Beverly, something to let her know that she was still in her corner, that she cared. In the end there was one obvious answer: she'd make her a tape.

When Dana was fifteen she heard X-ray Spex 'Oh Bondage! Up Yours!' play on a local college radio show. That was all it took to plant the seed of obsession. She was familiar with some mainstream punk bands—The Ramones, The Clash, Dead Kennedy's—but nothing would ever be as satisfying as hearing a woman scream in the face of sexism with raw, unrefined rage. At sixteen she was hitching to shows in Portland and Brunswick and Lincoln, trading pre-rolled joints for tapes, LPs, bootleg merch. Each trip facilitated the discovery of more incredible bands and Dana devoured them with insatiable hunger. Before long she'd amassed an enormous anthology, everything from Anarcho to Synthpunk. She devoted four shelves solely to female-fronted bands, organized by continent and alphabet. It was from these shelves that she would make her selection tonight. She wanted to compile a track list that Beverly could relate to, songs that had gotten her through her own teen years, validated her anger, encouraged her.

There was a time, shortly after her father died, that Dana thought

about leaving Derry, starting fresh in a real city with a thriving music scene. Maybe in one of the cities she frequented. Maybe someplace further. But something always kept her from going through with it. To Dana, Derry was like quicksand. And try as she might she couldn't seem to drag herself out of its sludge. She could keep herself afloat, just barely. And deep down, she knew that was all she deserved.

But why go there tonight. No point. It was time to focus. Her eyes roamed the shelves. She started to pull records, extract tapes, compile a stack to work with. She took the beginning and end of each song into account for the mix, tried a few combinations before she settled on one. Then she jotted down the final list and sat in before of the stereo. The tape deck opened with a thick 'click.' Dana loved that sound.

She spent the next several hours on the tape, recording and re-recording each track at the right volume, copying a pristine track list for the insert of the box. Lastly she wrote a little note on the cover. It was brief but said everything she wanted to say:

*Sorry for being an asshole. I'm here if you need anything. -Dana*

When she finished it was shortly after six AM. The sun peaked through pearly clouds. She hadn't even thought about sleeping; sobriety was almost as good as caffeine.

Shuffling feet outside drew her attention. Thick boots thudded into the ground. A door slammed. She heard the faint metal jingle of keys and the snap of a deadbolt locking. Dana went to the window and peered between the blinds. There was a man leaving Beverly's apartment. He was tall and lank with a sharp face and oily hair. He wore a blue work shirt and thick trousers and clutched a tin lunchbox between his fingers. Slowly, he sauntered down the steps, feet pounding the metal. She watched him speed off in a green pickup. A knot twisted in her stomach. This wet-skinned snake of a man could only be Beverly's father. Dana's guts twirled in her stomach.

*I guess he works early...*

It explained why she'd never seen him before. She usually went to bed just as his day was starting. He was bigger, more muscular than

she'd pictured him. And she was wary of his volatility. The last thing she wanted was to get Beverly in trouble. Better to drop the tape off while he was at work. She could only imagine how he might fly off the handle if he thought his little angel was consorting with the likes of her:

*'You tryna make friends with that tattooed hussy next door now? She's a tramp, y'know. Comes and goes all hours of the night, reeks of smoke n' booze. You wanna end up like her? A whore? A freak? No one to love her but the boys who pay for it? Or girls maybe—people say she's a rug-muncher. She make you a little tape? That the kinda music she listens to? I won't have her planting those sick ideas in your head—no sir—no daughter of mine. I'm serious Bevvie. Now how'm I gonna make you realize just how serious I am?...'*

Dana shivered.

She opened the front door and morning sun streamed in, blinding her. She stepped outside, shielding her eyes. She dropped off the tape in Beverly's mailbox and slipped back inside. Dana felt good, accomplished even. Then exhaustion hit her, hard. Yawning, she made her way to the bed, kicking off her socks as her body fell on the mattress. It was lumpy and the sheets were in bad need of a wash, but she was too tired to notice. She was asleep almost instantly. She didn't dream.

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It had been a very long time since Dana woke without even the slightest trace of a hangover. It was odd to feel so refreshed. She checked her watch. 4:00 pm. She'd have to leave for work soon. She rose and rifled through her dresser for something to wear. She hadn't done laundry in awhile, she realized as she rummaged through the hamper. She extracted wadded clothing, sniffed it, deemed it unacceptable and tossed it back in. Her cut-offs were ripe with sweaty summer scent. Her t-shirts weren't much better. No time to do a load before work either. Scowling, she crossed to the closet. She was out of time and knew of at least one thing that would be clean. Hanging on a hook under her jacket was the only dress she owned. Short-sleeved, black, cotton. She'd bought for her dad's funeral, hadn't worn it since. She slipped it on over her head. She'd grown

since she last wore it. It was shorter, almost too short. It clung to curves less pronounced at sixteen. She felt very unlike herself in it, and stared longingly at the hamper stuffed to the brim with her favorite band t shirts, tattered denim and flannel. No time to grieve for them. She laced up her boots, tossed her wallet into her bag and grabbed her keys off the table.

## 11. Don't Push Me

### Summary for the Chapter:

*Baby, baby, watch what you say  
You can't push me around!  
Cause' I'm gonna rip you to shreds some day  
You can't push me around...*

### Notes for the Chapter:

Sorry for the wait. Long chapter, lots of edits/additions that I hope you'll like. Also got another new chapter that I'll be posting later on tonight. Chapter song title by FLIRT. Thanks for the love  
xxxooo

**Flirt - Don't Push Me**



11.

She wasn't sure how long it had been since he'd last touched her. He'd come to her all quiet-like, as he always did, with that look in his eye. That sick look. He'd been determined as ever. And it had felt, as it always felt, like it would go on forever. Like it would never stop. But it did. And he did. And as days filled in one after another after another Beverly began to forget or repress or whatever she had to do to keep going.

She wasn't actually sure how often it happened. Maybe once every couple months, if she had to guess. Things would be quiet for awhile.

Then it would happen again. It would hurt. It would make her sick. The shame would be constant for awhile. And then time would pass. And she would slip back into her skin. And the incident would seem less and less likely to happen again; less and less likely that it ever happened at all. It would blend into the backdrop of her thoughts like a strange, wrong dream. And the same wound in her psyche would do its best, again, to heal. In the fourteen years she'd been alive, Beverly hadn't known what it was like to live without fear looming. Even he was at work or out drinking or asleep, his scrutiny clung to her, like a shadow.

It was approaching late afternoon and Beverly hadn't eaten yet. There wasn't any food in the apartment. She'd tried to make eggs that morning but the first one was green and smelled like acid when she cracked it open. She wasn't brave enough to check the rest of the fridge. When there was food in the house her father made her cook for him. She didn't know when he'd last been shopping. Her stomach rumbled. She ignored it, already running late. She'd made plans to meet the others at the Derry Summer Fair. Bill had offered to buy her ice cream. Like she needed to be bribed, she thought, tucking her feet into her Converse. She darted out the door, twisted the key into the lock behind her, then paused. Her mailbox was ajar.

*No mail on Sundays...*

Then it dawned on her.

*Another poem...?*

It was possible. The last one had turned up in her bag. Perhaps her admirer decided to write her again. She reached into the mailbox, fingers poised for paper. Instead, they met hard plastic. She extracted the object. A cassette box. Her eyes strained to read the sloppy script on the case.

*"Sorry for being an asshole. I'm here if you need anything. -Dana"*

The tape inside was covered in glitter glue and sharpie. Tucked next to it was a small paper which Beverly carefully unfolded. It must've taken Dana awhile to write out the track list. Beverly could see how much effort had gone into making the words legible. There was a

number by each song title and artist. Intrigued, Beverly's eyes wandered down the list:

*Side One: Hardcore/Riot Girl*

1. *30 Years- Electric Dreads*
2. *Who Will- Conflict*
3. *Hiroshima- Dirt*
4. *Survive- The Bags*
5. *No Life, No Future- Expelled*
6. *Youth Nabbed as Sniper- Blondie*
7. *Fuck Everything- No Thanks*
8. *Drive My Car- Nasty Facts*
9. *Me Gusta Ser Una Zora- VulpSS*
10. *Oh Bondage! Up Yours!- X Ray Spex*

*Side Two: Goth/Metal/Crooners*

1. *The Night Was Not- Desmond Child and Rouge*
2. *Jolene- Strawberry Switchblade*
3. *Twinkling Stars- Nine Circles*
4. *Rose Colored Corner- Lynn Castle*
5. *Star- Magenda*
6. *Spellbound- Siouxsie and the Banshees*
7. *Redrum- Alaska Y Los Pegamoides*
8. *No Attention- Next Crisis*



## 9. Ice Age- General Alert

## 10. Break it Up- Patti Smith

She studied the titles, reading and re-reading. She picked the tape up out of the box and ran her fingers over the gritty glitter.

Beverly was used to being treated like shit. She wasn't used to getting apologies. And it was clear that a lot of time had gone into this one. The words were simple sure, a little gruff even. But Beverly didn't care. It was enough. It was all she needed. She slipped the tape into her bag, smiling to herself. She couldn't wait to show the tape to the boys. They were shocked when Beverly had spoken to Dana outside her apartment. Afterward they'd flooded her with questions:

*"Who was that girl?"*

*"You know her?"*

*"She's covered in tattoos...is she dangerous?"* (That one had been Stanley of course.)

*"She's hot...and kind of scary..."* (Richie.)

*"Who is she?"*

To which Beverly replied casually, *"That's my neighbor Dana. She's cool."*

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The first blast of air reminded Dana why she didn't wear dresses. After a few blocks she decided to walk her bike. She could ride on the way home. No one would be out at five am to see her skirt blow up. As she walked she paid close attention to her surroundings, keyed in to notice anything out of the ordinary, any indication that her brain was breaking. It seemed like a normal day in Derry. Kids were out riding bikes and skate boards. Sundress-clad girls strolled in clusters giggling about whatever. Parents pushed fat babies in strollers. Joggers jogged, tugging their dogs in stride. Dana passed the ice cream shop, the post office, the plant nursery. She reached into her bag for a cigarette only to remember she'd smoked them all the night

before. Luckily Center Street Drug was just across the street from the bar.

*A couple more blocks, she affirmed. Then you can smoke.*

Mrs. Keene was working the counter at the drug store. She hated Dana and made no secret of it, glaring as she entered, eyes narrowed to slits. Pink bifocals rested on the tip of her nose. She smelled like cat food. She said nothing as Dana approached the counter, crumpled twenty in hand.

“Pack of Lucky Strikes,” Dana said. She’d learned to forego ‘please and thank ‘you’s’ with Mrs. Keene; the woman had resolved to hate her no matter how polite she was.

Mrs. Keene looked her over suspiciously. “One moment.”

Dana waited with feigned patience, her foot tapping anxiously as Mrs. Keene raked a plump finger across the packs on the wall. She was getting ready to jump over the counter and grab the damn things herself when a familiar voice caught her attention. She turned to look over her shoulder. It was the boys she’d seen in Beverly’s apartment. Not all of them—just three that she could see. One of them was the one who’d ogled her outside her building. He had thick glasses that he had to keep pushing back onto the bridge of his nose. His brown hair clung to his sweaty forehead and his mouth hung open a little, like a guppy. The other boy was smaller, squirrely in his movements. His large dark eyes darted as he spoke, his words a long stream of frantic exclamations. She recognized the third boy as Bill Denborough. Gangly, blue-eyed. A tragic aura hovered above him like a little rain cloud. They were buying candy and having a heated argument about which flavor of Pez to get. They noticed her one at a time, stopped talking, stared. Dana stared back. She opened her mouth to speak and said nothing. She felt a strange compulsion to tell them something but she didn’t know what. They remained at their odd standoff until Mrs. Keene slapped Dana’s cigarettes on the counter.

“\$4.38,” she demanded, shoving her rubbery palm in Dana’s face.

Outside the sun was sharp. The humidity seemed to have doubled

somehow. Dana turned and walked back to her bike, finding her keys and snapping them into the padlock. She dug into her bag for a lighter, balancing the bike against her hip. The sun cooked her as she walked towards the crosswalk. She didn't notice the blue Trans Am parked in the lot or the figures loitering around it until one of them called out to her.

"Nice ride, dike!"

Her head flashed in the voice's direction and she saw.

The big boy sat in the driver's seat, door open, Pabst can in hand. The bleach blonde leaned against the hood, palms flat. The coyote-looking boy stood at the left passenger door, that same shit-eating grin splitting his face. And Henry—his name she knew—leaned against the back of the car. His foot was propped on the bumper, cigarette pinched between his fingers. Even fifty feet away she could see that strange smile play at his lips, his gray eyes gleam with satisfaction.

Beverly's friends came outside and froze. Dana could see them from the corner of her eye. They were too scared to pick up their bikes. They just stood, petrified. Waiting.

Henry's friends snickered. Coyote-face licked his lips. Dana's pulse began to beat faster and faster. Anger burned in her brain so hot she couldn't think. Her heart hammered. She was going to do something unwise. And she didn't care. She let her bike fall to ground, shrugged her bag off her shoulders and walked straight for them, thick boots pummeling the pavement. Henry stood as she approached, taking his foot off the bumper, flicking his cigarette. His cold eyes looked her up and down. The other three were still chuckling from his last comment. Dana ignored them. They didn't matter. Her hand balled and she didn't hesitate. She planted her left foot square between his legs, twisted her hips to get good momentum, and swung. Her fist collided with his jaw and the 'THWACK' it made echoed through the parking lot. She hit him with everything she had. And it was enough force to send his twisted torso sprawling over the trunk of the Trans Am. The pain in her hand was sweeter than anything she'd ever felt; hot spirals of agony that curled her fingers and tingled their tips. From behind her Dana heard a faint "Holy shit," from one of the boys

outside the drug store.

It took his buddies a moment to process what they'd just seen. They stood dumbly, mouths gaping, eyes bugged. The big kid—the driver—was the first to act. He rushed to Henry, still slumped over the back of the car, back arched high. Dana could see the muscles in Henry's arms writhe as his friend reached for him.

"Y'ok Henry?" he asked, hand on his shoulder.

Henry jerked away so violently the bigger kid flinched. He took a step back. The bleach blond came around from the other side, pale and sweating bullets. Coyote-face leered down from the other side of the car. Of the three, he was the only one smiling. But it wasn't the smug, shit-face grin that he wore now. His mouth parted, his lips curled down over his teeth. He stared at Dana, hungrily.

Henry's body tensed. He moved slowly. Dana could see the restraint in his posture. Turning, he wiped blood from his face and looked at it, his eyes all lit up with danger.

"Thought you had some wild in you. Guess I was wrong," he said in a low voice. He lowered his hand from his jaw, dipping it into his pocket. "What you got is a death wish." He yanked his hand out fast, something clutched in it. A blade shot from the center of his fingers. Henry's hand tightened around the knife, arm stiff at his side. His face was all placid; the quiet before the storm. He advanced but the larger kid intervened, side-stepping into his path.

"Henry; come on man—"

"No," Dana said. "Fuck it—let him go."

The big kid looked at her over his shoulder. He looked confused, maybe even a little scared. His big face was sweaty and blotched with color. "Henry let's go man," he said.

Now it was Dana who advanced. One step. Then another. "Why don't you let him go?" she said again loudly. "We all know he's not gonna do anything. He's a coward—he's a *fucking coward*."

Coyote-boy twitched with excitement. His jaw dropped lower, tongue

flashing across his teeth. He looked on the verge of mania. Henry was not far behind. Dana could see rage swell in him just as it had the other night at the bar. His cold eyes seemed to shake as they glared at her, his scowl a mixture of confusion and disgust.

"I swear to God..." he said gravely.

"What?" She cocked her head, challenging him. "*What?*"

"I'll cut you open, cunt."

"Christ just shut *up*," she spat back. "You're so full of shit! You know what you are? You're a fucking *toy*! You're a child—a fucking *child*! You think it's cool to sit in parking lot and drink shit beer and yell at people? You think it's *attractive*?" Every word felt like a bomb going off inside of her. She couldn't have stopped even if she'd wanted to. "Look, I get it, ok?" she seethed. "You're pissed off. You're bored. And you think you can just go around and fuck with whoever you wanna fuck with. Newsflash dickhead: I'm not some fucking preteen—you don't scare me! You're a *joke*. You are a pathetic, sad fucking joke. I'm done with you. You hear me? I am *done*."

Her words took the fight out of him. Dana could see it in his posture and in his face. His shoulders sagged. The knife looked stupid in his hand, clasped barely between limp fingers. She funneled hate at him through her pupils and into his until he wouldn't meet her eyes. He didn't look down, exactly. Just away. Shame crept onto his countenance and Dana wasn't the only one to see it. His boys noticed too.

Again she advanced. And to her surprise, Henry actually took a step back and winced, every-so-slightly. "You stay the **fuck** away from me," she warned. "You see me, you cross the street. I'm not gonna tell you again." Dana scanned the other three, eyes wide and wild. Only coyote-boy met her eyes. Even he seemed startled by her gall—startled, or maybe exited.

She shot Henry a final, withering look. Then, as though overcome by revulsion, she put up her hands, shielding her face and emitting and audible "Ugh." She shook her head, grimacing. "Fuckin' low-life clowns."

She turned, picked up her bike and bag, and crossed the street. She didn't look back.

Henry's jaw quivered. It might have been anger that made him tremble as he did. But the shine in his eyes said otherwise.

## 12. Theme for a Jackal

### Summary for the Chapter:

*Dry drunk on a corner  
Wet waste of a girl  
Theme for a jackal*

*Play you death-song  
You probably listen  
Stand idly by as they rape your children  
Like you do now  
In fact you showed them how*

*All thoughts are in place  
All deeds are complete  
Play, theme for a jackal play*

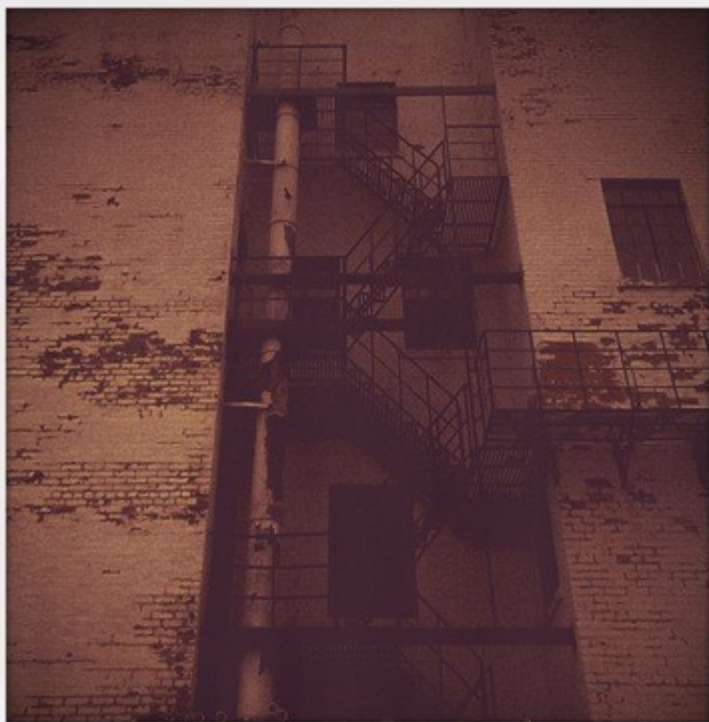
### Notes for the Chapter:

Here's a brand new, very Bowers Gang-heavy chapter for ya. Hope you enjoy this one.  
If you've commented or left Kudos, thank you--you rock my world ;)

Chaper song title by the Misfits

xxxooo

**Theme For A Jackal (C.I.  
Recording 1978)**



12.

Henry's face throbbed where she'd hit. One of her rings had been sharp, torn a neat gash just below his lip. Cool air would have felt good against the wound. But the night was hot. Mosquitos were out in droves. They hummed around his face, another irritant. Through the window he stared daggers. It was her fault, all of it.

Her breaths were even and heavy as she slept. The fan pointed at her bed made her hair dance. In the dark her pale skin glowed pearly. The window was open, only the screen in place. How easy it would be to slide his blade through the flimsy metal, rip it away, climb



through the frame. He wanted to. His legs twitched like a sprinter waiting on a gunshot. Even now it was as though she controlled the very air around him, made the sweat sting his eyes, plagued him with insects, taunted him with the thinnest possible barrier. She wasn't a person. The universe had built her as his personal torment. This perfect, unattainable creature who hated him.

*Bitch*, he seethed. *Stupid fucking bitch*.

She'd proven elusive the first time. And he'd been all too eager to give chase. But she'd gone and changed the rules of the game on him. He could have forgiven her for the shiner. Hell, it wasn't the first time he'd pissed off a girl. The only difference was he always hit back. And he would have too, would've done that and more. But when she started to talk he froze. Like a snake her venom was paralyzing. No one, not even his old man, had even spoken to him like that. Her words cut straight through him, pierced the callouses on the outside. She was truly savage. And not only her words but the way she spoke, like he was no one—like he was nothing. She told him to his face that he was shit, emasculated him, and walked off without a care in the world. And worst of all she'd done it front of the guys. Her defiance was unconscionable. It begged retaliation. Except that now on top of his own outrage, he had to prove a point to the others; reassert himself. He would let his boys know that no one—least of all some dike whore—made Henry Bowers feel small. He would make her his instrument. And he would enjoy doing it.

Dana stirred in her bed. She shivered, drawing the sheets up over her shoulders. A soft moan escaped her closed lips. Henry felt his ears and groin flush with fire. Eyes straining to focus through the dark, he willed her to do it again but she did not oblige him.

*Even in her sleep she's a fuckin tease...*

He tried to conjure the sweet taste of her on his tongue, the warm wetness of her walls as he slid his fingers inside her—deeper, deeper—probing till he found just the right spot. He'd *make* her moan, make her scream...

"See something you like?"

Startled, Henry reared back. His hand flew to his pocket, groped for his knife. His eyes focused before he could extend the blade and he sighed, irritated but relieved nonetheless. Patrick stood at the top of the stairs, hands on his hips. His lips drew back across his overbite and he smirked, baring shark teeth.

“Fuck!” Henry whispered angrily. “The fuck you doing here?”

Patrick shrugged. “You were late,” he said. “When you didn’t show I figured you might be here. Guess I was right.”

Another low moan from inside. Henry could hear fabric rustle. Patrick’s eyes flashed darkly and his grin widened. “That her? She asleep?” he asked, nodding at the window.

‘SHUT UP,’ Henry mouthed, standing.

“What’s she wearin’? Bet it ain’t much...”

Patrick made to advance but Henry put up a hand to stop him. “Will you shut the fuck up?” he snarled. “Her fuckin window’s open.”

A shadow passed briefly over Patrick’s face before the grin returned. He backed off.

“Talk downstairs,” Henry muttered.

Patrick sauntered past him. He descended the stairs with surprisingly light steps, no doubt adept at creeping in and out of girl’s rooms. Henry turned to look over his shoulder at the window one more time before following suit. Half way down the stairs he remembered his erection. He adjusted himself as best he could through his jeans, tried to dismantle the lewd images dancing circles around his brain. He took a breath and caught a whiff of Patrick’s dirty hair. That pretty much killed it.

They reached the ground. Patrick extracted a smashed pack of Camels from his back pocket. He took two cigarettes out and offered the first to Henry, as he’d learned to do long ago. They smoked a few puffs in silence. Patrick spoke first.

“Talked to Belch and Vic,” he said casually.

Henry took a drag. “And?”

Patrick flicked his Zippo open and closed. “And?” he echoed.

“Get the fuck off my dick Hockstetter,” Henry hissed. His face hurt. His balls were sore. And his patience was hanging by a thread. “they in or what?”

Patrick stopped toying with his lighter. He flexed his mouth, running his tongue over his canines. “Vic’s game. Belch was a hard sell. But I wore him down.”

“What’d you tell him?”

Patrick smirked sheepishly. “Told him we were gonna scare her.”

“*Scare?*”

“Ain’t exactly a lie.”

Henry took a long drag. It was a quiet night. He could hear the embers on his cigarette sizzle when he inhaled. Patrick finished his and rolled the cherry onto the sole of his boot. He stuck his hands in his pockets. “So tomorrow...”

“...yeah?”

Patrick hesitated.

“I ain’t playin’ games with you Pat. Spit it out.”

“Just wonderin’ how this thing’s gonna go down...”

Henry flexed his fingers. Patrick wouldn’t meet his eyes and it irked him. “Meanin’ what?”

Patrick shrugged again and asked, innocently as he could. “You gonna share?”

Glaring, Henry’s face reddened. His body tensed as it always did when he quelled an urge to do harm. “What’s it to you?” he asked, coldly.

“It’s a fair question.”

“Fair ain’t got nothing to do with it,” Henry said. “You know you got some balls Hockstetter...”

Patrick raised his hands defensively. “Just figured I’d ask. You’re the boss.” There was a hint of condescendence in his voice but he figured Henry was too preoccupied to catch it. He was wrong. Growling, Henry grabbed Patrick’s t shirt, tugging him forward and slamming him into the side of the building.

“Had about enough of your shit Pat,” he warned, his voice low and steady.

Patrick’s face twisted in anger. His instinct was to hit back but Henry was stronger and he knew it. He submitted, relaxing in his hold. The two boys hadn’t come to blows since they were thirteen. Exploding like this was over the top, even for Henry. It intrigued Patrick, to say the least. “Why you gettin’ your panties in a bunch?” he asked, eyes narrowed as he studied Henry’s face. “What is it about this girl?”

Henry didn’t answer. He tightened his grip on Patrick’s shirt, dug his forearms into him.

Patrick grinned. He had an intuition for this sort of thing. He could track chaos like a blood hound, and once he caught a whiff of the scent nothing could stop him from digging it up. “Ya know...we don’t hafta wait til tomorrow...”

Henry looked skeptical. He loosened his grip a little. “What?”

“No time like the present...”

Scoffing, he released him. “The other guys-”

“Fuck em.’ We don’t need those guys. She’s wide fuckin’ open Henry. We could break in there right the fuck now—wake her up. I could get us in there quiet. Bitch would never see it comin’...we could take turns...” He spoke as the devil on Henry’s shoulder. After all, lighting fires was what Patrick Hockstetter did best.

Henry seemed to consider the offer for a split second, but only that.

Then shaking his head, he held up a hand, a signal for Patrick to stop talking. "Too many people around. She might scream."

"Oh she'll scream..."

"And get us caught," he finished, annoyed. "No. We do this right. Get her alone. Four against one."

Patrick sighed. He was disappointed but he knew better than to push any further. "Like I said, you're the boss."

Henry shot him a look, a warning. "Don't forget it."

Patrick lit them each another smoke. Butterflies soared in his stomach. He couldn't remember the last time he'd been so excited about anything. "Meet at my place tomorrow? Midnight?"

Henry didn't seem to be listening. He was looking back at Dana's window. The moon light beamed back in his glassy eyes. "You do right by me tomorrow night, I might think about it." He sounded strange, sad almost.

"Think about what?" Patrick asked, though he didn't need to. He already knew what Henry was thinking, could see the gears in his brain go to work as he strategized.

There was a long pause before Henry answered. "Sharing."

## 13. Could Have Been Me

### Summary for the Chapter:

*yesterday when I was walking home from a party  
I noticed someone was following me  
so hurried through the streets to keep ahead of him  
got so scared when kept hearing his footsteps*

*you got to run for it girl  
you got to run for it girl  
otherwise  
you'll be captured and taken...*

### Notes for the Chapter:

This is where the shit hits the fan.

TW: the next few chapters are very dark and very graphic. They could be triggering for sexual assault/abuse survivors as well as anyone suffering from post traumatic stress disorder or anxiety. Stay safe; read at your own risk.

Thank you to those who have taken the time to comment/leave kudos, and to those who will in the future. I love ya'll.

Chapter song by Next Crisis  
Enjoy the ride  
xxxooo

**Next Crisis - No Attention**



13.

That night the bar was busy. Strange for a Monday but Dana didn't mind it; missing her Saturday shift had left her hurting. Thankfully, people were feeling generous. So much so that by the time last call crept up she'd taken in over \$200 in tips.

She wasn't sure why, exactly. Maybe because she kept her cool and got the drinks out fast. Maybe because for the second night in a row she'd worn a dress. Maybe because tonight, for the first time in ages, Dana was actually in a good mood. It was amazing how much the

confrontation with Henry had lifted her spirits. Her hand had only gotten sorer since yesterday but it was well worth the discomfort. Punching him made Dana feel like she had at least some pretense of control. Now more than ever, she needed that.

She crossed back to the kitchen where Terry was mopping up and tapped him on the shoulder. When he turned, she held out a wad of cash.

"Damn," he croaked. "you musta done ok tonight. You sure that's all for me? I didn't hardly even do much cookin'..."

Dana grinned. "Yeah that's all you. You did plenty. Also," she said, looking down. "I kinda feel like a dick for yelling at you the other night on the phone. I'm sorry, Terry. That was shitty."

Terry counted the bills. "For seventy-five bucks you can yell at me any time you want." He chuckled, tucking the money into the breast pocket of his greasy shirt. He looked around expectantly. "You got more to do out here? I can stay and help if ya want."

Dana considered the offer. A few nights ago she would have certainly taken him up on it. Tonight, though, she felt good—like her old capable self. She wanted to ride that feeling.

"I'll be good," she said.

"You sure?"

"Yeah, I'm sure."

He lumbered long limbs past her, smiling over his shoulder as he ducked out the front door. She locked up behind him and went about her nightly duties. She finished the rest of the dishes, cut fruit for the next day, circled the rag across the bar top, upturned chairs onto tables. Terry had already taken out the trash.

When she was done she gathered up her things. She looked longingly at the liquor on the top shelf. She wanted so badly to make herself a drink, sit with the cold glass pressed between her palms, stare down at the ruby pool, savor the sweetness of it. But it wasn't a good idea. Better to stay present. This meant no bar side cigarette either; no



point torturing herself.

On her way out she paused by the back door. She felt a tinge of uneasiness. Anxiety kinked in her guts but she hushed it. It was only a short slip of a walk to her bike. She pulled her keys from her bag.

*Everything's fine. Everything's normal. Chill.*

Dana stepped out into the warm night. Cicadas in the trees made the air hum. She slid the key into the lock, twisted until it clicked. She'd locked her bike up to the fence that skirted the dumpsters. She approached it. At first her brain didn't register what she saw. She stood on paper-thin ice and in a second that ice shattered, plunging her into a pool of cold, cold dread. She could feel herself sink deeper with every step she took towards her bike. Tethered to the handlebars by a white ribbon, was a large, red balloon. It bounced cheerfully in the breeze, shiny and round as a candy apple.

*There's no way—absolutely no fucking way...*

Dana walked towards it, her limbs locked stiffly. Her brain was betraying her and there were no substances in her body, no booze, no drugs—not even adrenaline. She reached out to touch it—see if it had mass—if she could feel its contours as clearly as she saw them. But as she raised her hand the ribbon slipped and the balloon began to drift away. It floated off, disappearing around the other side of the building. Dana rushed after it, rounding the corner and slamming into someone.

She'd been going faster than she realized. The collision knocked the wind out of her and she stumbled backwards. Hands tightened around her shoulders, catching her and holding on. She tried to focus her eyes through the dark but the balloon had burned red into them. Everything looked murky and dark green. The hands still held her shoulders; fingers dug into the muscle. She tried to shrug them off, squinted to see. The haze in her vision cleared and a mouthful of gums and teeth grinned down at her. Coyote Boy beamed. Dark hair was smeared across his forehead, his eyes wide with frenzy.

"Where you goin' huh?" he asked, pulling her closer. His fingers drilled into her flesh.

"Get off," she snapped, jerking away. She took a step back. He advanced. She stared, incredulous. "Are you kidding me? I fucking told you—"

"You don't *tell* us anything," he interrupted, lips curling back further. His leer was so big his jaw looked broken. His muscles were straining. It looked as though it took all his willpower to hold himself back.

"Get out of my way," Dana said steadily. "I'm not in the mood."

But Coyote boy only shook his head chidingly. "Ain't gonna happen sweetheart." He raised any eyebrow, licking his lips. "We just wanna talk."

Dana could hear the phoniness in his promise. "*We?* I only see you..."

Behind him Dana noticed a shimmer, something shiny catching the moonlight. She narrowed her eyes. Peeking ever-so-slightly from the other side of the building, sat the Trans Am, parked and empty.

*Oh God...*

The others were scattered somewhere. And Dana knew with grim certainty why they'd come.

He must've seen the realization set in because he instinctively took a step towards her, widening his stance a bit. He was ready for her to run. Dana considered it for half a second. But he had a tracker's body—all limbs. She probably couldn't outrun him, and smoking half a pack a day for the past two months didn't help her odds any. She might be able to take him in a fight, but she couldn't take all four. No. They had the upper hand. The only place she'd be safe was in the bar. That was her best chance—her only chance. If she could get back inside she could call the cops—and she would call them in a heartbeat. This was not just a threat, it was an attack.

He was trying to read her. His ears listened to her breathing, his eyes darted over her face and scanned down, checking her posture—her muscles—any hints her body would give. She would have to fake it and fake it good to throw him off.

With feigned composure, she sighed and rolled her eyes. “Fuck this,” she said, striding past him. She shouldered him as she passed, an added flex. She didn't get more than a few steps in before he rushed her. He grabbed her arm where it bent, tugged her back. But she was ready for it. As he swung her around to face him she raised the keys up and whipped them at his face as hard as she could.

They struck his jaw, narrowly missing his open mouth. She heard the metal crack against his bone and he recoiled, doubled over, clutching his face.

“Bitch,” he hissed. “Sneaky fuckin’ bitch!” Blood and spit watered from his fat lip.

Dana didn't waste time. She spun and ran, keys clenched tight in her fist. She had just rounded the corner when she was caught again. Arms clapped her torso, lifting her up off her feet, stopping her breath. From the corner of her eye she could see white blonde hair. It was the stringy boy who held her now, her back flush with his chest. He constricted her like a straight jacket. She thrashed in his hold but he was stronger than he looked.

“Y'ok Pat?” he asked. She felt the words vibrate from his body through hers.

Coyote boy— 'Pat'—was crouched and palming at his face. She had, in fact, managed to graze his tooth. The shard of enamel glittered on the asphalt. “Hold her Vic—just hold her.”

She couldn't get free; his arms clamped so tight she was starting to get dizzy. Struggling only made him tighten his grip. Dana could see the tiny soft hairs that sprung from his arm, like peach fuzz. She angled her chin down, closed her eyes.

*Just like biting a peach, she thought, lunging. Like biting a peach...*

She bit into him and he dropped her, screaming. She landed on her knee with her teeth still in him. Pain streaked through her skin and into the muscle and bone beneath. She struggled to her feet, drew her foot back and heaved the toe of her boot into his crotch. She skirted around him as he fell, lunging for the door. Her hands shook so

violent she could barely bring them to the lock. She could hear the boys' footsteps behind her—far enough away—she still had time. She jammed the key into the deadbolt and heard it click. She was so relieved she could have cried. She pulled back on the door. It cracked open just enough for her to catch a just glimpse of the safety waiting inside. But as her foot crossed the threshold a hand snarled her hair, snapping her head back, slamming it into the doorframe. Her teeth clapped together. Her vision tunneled and her legs tingled with a warmth that quickly consumed her body. She was falling backwards; collapsing. She knew that she'd lost. It was her last conscious thought before oblivion swallowed her. Then there was nothing.

## 14. Precious Thing

### Summary for the Chapter:

*I would like to wrap your hair round your neck like a noose*

*I would like to wrap your legs around my neck like a lock*

*You are my precious thing, thing of speed and beauty*

*You are my precious thing*

*As long as you remain beneath me*

*I will hold you down, I will hold you down*

*I will pin you down*

*I will hold you down, I will hold you down*

*I will punch down you*

### Notes for the Chapter:

TW:

graphic depictions of rape/sexual assault; graphic depictions of violence/battery; sadism; objectification.

This chapter was hard to re-write. And it's even harder to read. Please proceed with caution.

I ended up making it longer than the original and added more bowers gang dialogue/interaction. I tried to flesh out their characters a bit more. I wanted to really emphasize their deplorable natures as individuals as well as within the group dynamic.

Please note that their character trajectories are based off of those originally written in the book/rendered in the 2017 remake. In short, they evil. This is not a redemption story. I've made a conscious decision to write the characters as irredeemable. There will be no absolution for them.

Thank you for taking the time to read. As always

comments/kudos appreciated <3

Chapter title song by Big Black.

### **Big Black - Precious Thing**



14.

She was on the ground, her palms skinned flat on the cement. Her ears rang. There were angry voices muffled on the other side of the

static. She could see movement; dark shapes closed in around her. When she tried to get up one of them landed a kick to her ribs. She heard the crack from inside, felt it lace through her bone. Pain spread through her torso and limbs, filled the soles of her feet with an ugly tickle. Her vision slipped again—it hurt too much. She wanted to sleep. She wanted to die.

She felt them raise her—felt hands on her, hands holding her, bending her, twisting her arms, pinning her wrists. She tried to shake them off. But there were too many and she was too weak and only half-conscious. Voices hissed. At first she couldn't understand the words but bit by bit they came.

“—crazy fucking crazy! What the fuck, Pat—you said we were just gonna scare her!”

“She don't look scared? I think she looks pretty fucking scared.”

“Jesus—she's fucking unconscious! She's had enough, ok Henry? You gotta stop!”

“You shut up Belch—just shut up! This is what you signed up for so don't fuckin' turn chicken shit now!”

Quiet. She felt cold on her wrists, sleek metal clamped tight. First one *'click.'* Then the other.

When she tried to speak her tongue felt too big for her mouth. She

could sort of see again, tipped down. All at once her eyes shot open and she jerked forward, coughing.

“She’s comin’ to, Henry.”

She twisted, tried to swing at them but her wrists were joined. She flexed and a metallic jingle answered.

*Handcuffs.*

Not plastic like the ones you get when you’re a kid to play cops and robbers. These were thick, strong shackles. Like the ones she’d worn once before. The boys holding her shifted to take her weight.

“Lift her up.”

Hands wrapped around her torso, tilted her vertical. Dana groaned as pain slapped her ribs. Her eyes focused on the arms that held her. On her right was Coyote boy.

*Pat. Patrick.*

He smirked despite his splintered tooth and bloody gums. On her left was the bleach blonde. She could see the perfect imprint her teeth had left in his arm.



*And Vic. That's the other one—Vic. Remember. Remember their names.*

The large boy stood before her, his name still a mystery to her. His trucker hat was plastered over sweaty hair—sweaty face—sweaty everything. He was pale and looked pained. Beside him stood Henry, jaw clamped so tight it dug diverts into his cheeks. His face had a warm glow to it, like someone who'd been working in the sun. But his eyes were cold and cruel and slick with smugness. Tonight, he had an air of ceremony about him.

“You look good this way,” he said, gesturing. “Real good.”

She pulled at the handcuff's chain. Looked at it. Looked at him. “What...the fuck...”

He didn't answer.

“Take. The. Handcuffs. Off. Take them off now.”

“Or what?” he asked, tilting his head like she had when she'd mocked him. “Or *what?*”

“This isn't fucking funny.”

“Am I laughing?” he asked gravely. “Any of us laughing?” No. They weren't.

Dana tugged against the two restraining her, bucked forward, twisted her shoulders. Her eyes darted around the group, landing eventually on the boy in the trucker hat. His skin was ashy, blotched with pink patches. He met her stare reluctantly, his expression one of mournful shame. “Look,” she said, keeping eye contact with him. “you made your point. I get it-”

“You don’t get shit,” Henry interrupted coldly. “But you will.” His lips parted, his mouth dipping up into that nameless expression—half smile, half sneer—like he was seeing the future, and it amused him.

Slowly he turned, head bowed, shoulders hunched. He advanced silent as a lynx stalking a rabbit through the snow. When he spoke his voice was calm, quiet. “This coulda’ been been different y’know. We coulda’ been friends. But you had to go and run that mouth a’ yours.” They were inches apart now. She could smell smoky fabric, cheap beer, body odor, something faintly spicy. “You *hit* me.”

“You had it coming,” she said back. Henry drew back his fist and slammed it into her cracked ribs. Dana fell forward, choking on the scream stuck in her throat.

“Get up,” he growled. He seized a fistful of her hair and pulled. “Look at me.”

“Fuck you.”

Henry released her hair, clamped his hand around her chin, twisted her face toward his own. “Y’know you’re lucky you’re so fine,” he hissed. “or you’d be dead already. I’d a’ cut you up, thrown your

body in the fucking river. Ain't like anybody'd miss you.” He let his hand trail down her throat, felt her pulse ram against his thumb. He lowered it to her chest, palm flat to absorb the fury of her heartbeat. He could feel the fear in her blood. Blood didn’t lie. He raised his eyes to hers, pupils blown. “But that’d be a waste,” he murmured. “Ain’t that right boys?”

They snickered in affirmation.

“Take her to the car.”

Patrick grunted, looping his arm around her waist. “Come on,” he said. “Move.” Vic tugged at the chain and they started to drag her.

Dana thrashed against them, bucked, tried to wrench her body from their arms.

“Hey easy—easy,” Patrick purred in her ear.

She hitched in his arms and he nearly dropped her. He let out an irritated groan. “Vic, grab her feet.”

When they reached the Trans Am Dana assumed they meant to toss her in it. Instead Coyote boy lead her to the back, pushing her until her hips were flush with the car’s low frame. Henry circled around to her left.

“Bend over.”

Her blood went cold. She looked from one boy to the next, imploring them with her silence.

“Bend over,” he repeated.

Dana shook her head. “Don’t,” she said. It sounded more like an appeal than an order and she knew they could hear the difference as well she could.

Henry sighed impatiently and nodded at Patrick.

He was all too eager to oblige, taking hold of her fingers. When she tried to shake him off, he jerked her thumb backwards, forcing it towards the top of her hand. Any more pressure and it would have snapped. Dana froze.

“That’s right,” he whispered. “you heard him sweetheart. Now be a good girl and bend over or I’ll break em’ one at a time.”

She ignored the pain in her hand, locking her knees. “No.” She said it once, and then again louder, and again, and again, and again. She screamed it as though it was the only word she knew—the only one she’d ever known, her voice a fury of cracked screeches.

Patrick tugged back on her fingers but Vic intervened. “ Don’t—she’ll

scream louder,” he said. He slapped his hand over her mouth, adding pointedly “Don’t fuckin’ bite me again.”

Henry was restless. He was through waiting. Elbowing the other two out of the way he stepped behind Dana and jammed his boot into the back of her knee. She collapsed and he leaned over her, thrusting his hand under her chin to expose her throat. She heard a ‘tick’ and felt the briery edge of his blade at her jugular.

“You quiet down,” he warned. “or I’ll cut you open, here and now.” It was no idle threat, she knew. Slowly, he removed the blade and raised himself off.

“You keep watch,” he ordered the big boy.

“Henry...”

“Stand up front and keep fucking watch!”

He didn’t object further. She heard his lumbering footsteps fade as he left, resigned to his task. Patrick held her head against the car. He brushed the hair from her eyes, rubbed her neck with the intimacy of a lover. Vic held her shoulders.

Henry took a moment to look at her. Her will broken, her bent, bloodied body a gift waiting to be unwrapped. He planted a foot between her legs. Patrick watched him hike up her skirt, exposing her to his liking. He marveled at how Henry’s face could look simultaneously so frantic and still somehow tranquil.

Henry slid his knife through the thin fabric of her underwear and sliced. Today of all days she'd worn a dress, like some cruel, cosmic joke. She could hear the light jingle of his belt buckle, fumbling hands on worn denim, the final, revolting zip as he pulled down his jeans.

"You're gonna pay for this, you know," Dana said, from a throat raw with curses. "You're all gonna pay."

Henry knelt beside her. "Don't much look like you're in a position to make threats. You remember what you called me yesterday?" he asked, bringing his face to hers.

"...a child."

"A toy." His lips twitched. "Funny. From where I'm standin', you're the one looks like a toy." He stood, spat into his hand. Dana closed her eyes. She heard the sound of flesh smack wet flesh. He pushed himself against her opening. Smooth. Unprotected. Again he let his weight fall full upon her, placed a palm on either side of her face, leaned over and brought his lips to her ear. His warm breath needled her neck. "I'm gonna fuck you from behind like the bitch you are." He slithered forward, parted her, was inside her.

She cried out, sliced. Her dry walls were no match for his size. He spat again into his hand, circled it around his shaft, thrust in deeper. More pain shook her, crashed and clattered her pelvis like broken glass. He slid his right hand under her and began to rub quick, rough circles. He was trying to make her wet and to her horror, it was working. Then, groaning, he took her hips hard. His greedy hands dug white marks into the flesh, as rammed his full length into her, each thrust more forceful than the next—more urgent.

She couldn't focus on anything else. Details escaped. It was too much. There was no consoling herself with thoughts of later or after or someday; Dana was trapped in this time—this moment—with *him*.

Her breath fogged the back windshield. Somehow the inside too. A dense mist spread across the car's interior. The others didn't see it. But she did. There was movement inside, shapes sliding, contorting. Two glowing rings burned through the fog. A pair of eyes—the same yellow eyes. They floated toward the glass, sizzling like embers. This time, though, there was a face surrounding them: bulbous white head etched with red streaks, wispy strands of copper hair that trailed down to its jaw. A red nose, round like a cherry, sat at the center of the face. It grinned at her, two jagged teeth unsheathed from lustrous crimson lips. The pane of glass was all that separated them. It was gleeful as it watched Henry violate her, her bound body rocking with the violence of his thrusts. When it laughed she was the only one to hear it. Its howls harmonized with the cheers of the boys restraining her. Slowly, it retreated back into the darkness. Its eyes were the last to fade.

“Fuck,” Henry groaned. “FUUCCCKKKKKK!” He collapsed on top of her, panting softly. His cheeks rosy, his eyelids heavy. When he pulled out some of his come trailed down her leg. He was working on tugging his pants back up when Patrick released Dana's neck.

“Hope Henry ain't tired you out too much,” he whispered. “you still got two more dicks to take tonight.” He took her hips in his hands and flipped her over onto her back. Then he went to work unfastening his belt.

Dana's eyes widened, panic surging through her all over again. She drew her legs back and kicked at him with her remaining strength.

“Hey—hey—none a’ that now,” he scolded. He caught her ankles, yanked her legs apart. He pulled Dana towards the edge of the car so she straddled him, then went back his belt. He was wrestling with the buttons on his jeans when Henry shot out a hand and grabbed his collar, yanking him off of her. Patrick soared shoulder-first into a tree a few feet away. Winded, he climbed to his feet, his face twisting in outrage. “What the fuck Henry? I—I thought-”

“You thought wrong.”

“But you *said!*” Patrick shrieked. “You said you were gonna share her!”

“I don’t share nothin’ with nobody.” Henry stood in front of Dana, his hand resting possessively on her knee. “Keep your hands off her.”

“This is bullshit,” he spat angrily. “You said-”

Henry’s blade was out before he could protest further. “Leave it Pat,” he warned, the way one might speak to a dog with something dead in its mouth. He looked over at Vic, beckoning him with the knife. “Come here. Help me flip her over.”

It took all three of them to get Dana back on her stomach. Once they’d pinned her Henry yanked the fabric of her dress taut. Starting at the collar, Henry sliced the seam down a few inches and tore the rest. He shoved her hair aside, dipped the blade into her back. Shallow at first, then deeper. The pain took her breath before she



could cry out.

“What are you doing?” Patrick asked, face brightening a bit at the sight of blood.

Henry’s hand shook as he carved. “Bitch likes tattoos so much, I’m gonna give her one.” When he was finished jabbed Dana’s back with two fingers. “You boys see that?” he asked gravely. “Now none of you will forget who she belongs to,” he added, leaning over her. “and neither will she. Bring her up.” They lifted her to her feet. The agony of standing almost made her pass out.

Henry stood before her in triumph. “Thinkin’ about un-cuffing you now,” he began. “Lettin’ you crawl back to that shit hole apartment a’yours. But I wanna make somethin’ clear first.” He thrust a pointed finger in her face. “You tell anyone about this—I mean *anyone*—next time it won’t be my dick I put in you. It’ll be this.” He held the blade up, pressed the cold metal to her cheek. Then he lowered it, slid the point of the blade up her thigh, trailing it higher and higher. “D’you understand?” he asked. He held the blade there a moment before dipping it back into his pocket. “Tell me you understand and I’ll take off the cuffs.”

Dana sucked what saliva she had from her cheeks and spat. It was more blood than spit that hit Henry’s chest. The ruby blob trailed down his shirt and rested on his belt. He put his hand to it and wiped. His nostrils flared and the muscles in his arms started to quiver. Dana’s voice cracked as she spoke.

“Suck my d-”

She saw his fist as a blur from the corner of her eye, and the world got quiet again.

## 15. The Survivor

### Summary for the Chapter:

*my body is too weak to move,  
the earth and i in agony,  
where have all the flowers gone?  
where have all the people gone?  
tell me where my family are,  
tell me where me life has gone,  
whatever happened to mankind?  
whatever happened to the earth?  
I feel my cells disintegrate,  
I didn't want to end this way,  
why am I being punished for a crime,  
that I did not commit?  
someone help me, help me please,  
there's no one left to hear me,  
there's no one left to hear me...*

### Notes for the Chapter:

TW:

graphic descriptions of the aftermath of sexual assault/battery.

Short one but I'm hard at work on the next two. chapter 16 will be another new one, from Henry's perspective :)

Thanks for reading/commenting/kudos

Chapter song by Saint Vitus Dancers ; it's beautiful, dreamy, brutal, give it a listen if ya wanna <3

**St. Vitus Dancers - The Survivor**



14.

Her fingers twitched. Skinned tips groped gravel. Her joints stretched as she moved. The sick ache they brought made her gag but gagging hurt worse than stretching. Blood on her face had dried to the ground. Patches of flesh tore from her forehead as she raised herself to sit. She knew where she was and what had happened with total clarity. Despite the throbbing bumps on her head there were no gaps in her memory. The only thing that wasn't clear was how bad it was. Fresh pain lit her body with every second of consciousness.

*Henry. Patrick. Vic. Remember. Henry. Patrick. Vic. A blue Trans Am.*

Her lip was torn and the blood there was still wet. It was a challenge to open her mouth wide enough to check her teeth. Two were loose but there was a good chance they'd take to the root. Her vision was cloudy in one eye, the skin around it tight with fluid. A bomb thundered through her skull when she turned her head. Through the dark her eyes raked her body for further damage. There was road rash on her forearms and elbows. Her legs were torn bad too; on her knee was a gash so deep she could see white fat bloom through the pulp. It hurt to breath. She prodded her side timidly and winced. If not broken, her ribs were at least badly bruised. She took as deep a breath as she could manage, lowered her hand to her thighs, reached between them. Her crotch burned hot and raw. Dana raised her hand, eyed the thick lather on her fingers. It glowed opalescent, pink and milky. Her blood; his come. She wretched. As she leaned forward she felt the skin on her back stretch. She hissed in pain and remembered. He'd cut something, carved words. She reached over her shoulder, grazing the tender flesh. The cuts, swollen now, were coated in light scabs. She tried to see how far down they went, follow the course of the script. It was more than a word or two, she realized bleakly. It was more like a sentence; it spanned the width of her shoulders. A sob balled in her throat but she knew how badly it would hurt to cry. She swallowed it, weighed her options.

She could pound on a door if she wanted, wake up some stranger, show them her bloody crotch and torn knees and ask for a ride to the hospital. She imagined what the drive would be like. Uncomfortably quiet or worse, maybe they'd ask her questions, try to get her to interact. She'd bleed on their seats, catch the judgment in their eyes when they glanced at her from the rear view mirror. And news would spread like wildfire. Within a few days everyone would know. And that look would become a staple expression on the face of everyone who laid eyes on her for who knew how long.

*Fuck that.*

She could call the cops from inside if she knew where her keys were. But looking around she didn't see them anywhere. Had she dropped them? Perhaps there were a few gaps in her memory after all...

*Henry. Patrick. Vic. A blue Trans Am. Stay focused. Don't loose it.*

No—they weren't dropped. She remembered she'd managed to get the door unlocked. Carefully, Dana began to stand. Her muscles quivered with the strain and she swayed a bit before steadying herself. She limped to the back door only to find it closed and, when she tried the handle, locked.

*Fuckers. Goddamn fucking bastards.*

Either they had her keys with them or they'd hidden them somewhere, dropped them down a sewer grate, maybe flung them onto a nearby roof. This meant her bike wasn't going anywhere either, not that she'd have been able to ride it. Dana had only one option. The hospital was roughly a mile from the bar. She'd walk.

It was cool for a summer night. Goosebumps budded where her skin hadn't been scraped away. The breeze lapped at the wounds on her back. She tucked the flap of dress over her shoulder but it kept slipping. Her boot scuffs echoed in the quiet lot as she began to trudge.

*Henry. Patrick. Vic. Blue Mustang—wait no—it wasn't—Trans Am—it was a Trans Am. Henry. Vic. Patrick.*

She headed towards Derry General. Each step was agony. But she took them one at a time, focused on getting through the next, then the next, then the next.

*Henry. Patrick. Vic. And the boy with the hat—trucker hat. Blue Trans Am.*

Henry's semen was inside of her; his friends' blood was in her mouth, caked under her nails. It didn't matter how much Sheriff Bowers got off on screwing with her; he couldn't argue with DNA. She remembered Henry's threats. She didn't care. She didn't care what how many people she had to tell and re-tell. She didn't care about the depth of details she'd have to give to countless authorities who would judge her, probe her, shame her, offer her blanket condolences. Spite and rage held her aloft as she staggered.

*Henry. Patrick. Vic. Trucker hat. Henry. Blue Trans Am. Henry. Vic.  
Patrick. Henry...*

## 16. Something I Can Never Have

### Summary for the Chapter:

*I still recall the taste of your tears  
Echoing your voice just like the ringing in my ears  
My favorite dreams of you still wash ashore  
Scraping through my head 'till I don't want to sleep  
anymore*

*You make this all go away  
You make this all go away  
I'm down to just one thing, and I'm starting to scare  
myself  
You make this all go away  
You make this all go away  
I just want something  
I just want something I can never have*

### Notes for the Chapter:

TW: stalking, recalling of sexual assault.

New chapter, from Henry's POV. It takes place simultaneously while Dana is waking up/walking to the hospital. Chapter title song by Nine Inch Nails.

Hope you enjoy! thank you for reading/commenting/kudos you're the best <3

**Nine Inch Nails - Something I Can  
Never Have**





16.

He thought he'd feel better when it was over, a weight lifted. He'd shown her—he'd shown all of them. His lesson was conveyed with brutal clarity. Now, standing alone in the dark, Henry felt no relief. Delirium, maybe—invigoration. But satisfaction? *Hell no*. He'd done what he set out to do. And in that moment it had felt good, there was no denying it. Shit—it felt *great*. He'd beaten the fight out of her,

watched her break. The moment he entered her, felt the tension of her pussy stretch to take him in, was the closest he'd ever come to pure bliss. And all he could think about since it ended was how urgently he needed to feel like that again. Fucking her had not sated Henry's obsession. He had gotten a taste, but he was still hungry.

Part of him still couldn't believe it happened at all. Wild as he was, Henry had always operated within the confines of the law to some degree. This was different—*she* was different. She had this way of maddening him, of pushing his buttons just so. When he was around her Henry felt more like himself than he ever had; he didn't care about consequences—he acted on want. And damn if he didn't like that feeling.

As the night advanced, Henry felt his longing like an itch he couldn't reach. He waited until the others were drunk, which didn't take long. Then he made his way her place. He wasn't totally sure why he'd come. But he knew that every step that brought him closer scratched at that itch a little.

Her keys weighted his hand. He'd kept them as a sort of keepsake at first, a way to honor the evening—something he could hold and touch. Now, standing before her door, he felt a sense of purpose—he felt close to something. He'd been inside her. He'd smelled her bleeding. And not only the blood from the wounds he'd inflicted. There'd been blood when he fucked her, Henry had popped enough cherries to tell the difference. He'd been on the fence about letting the others have a turn with her before. But it was her first time—*he* was her first. And he wasn't about to let anyone cheapen it, least of all Patrick fucking Hockstetter.

Patrick hadn't said more than a word or two since it happened. He was mad and he made no secret of it. He knew better than to confront Henry so instead he pouted. He took a whole bottle of Old Crow whisky to himself, sat on the couch and nursed it until he passed out, grimace plastered on his face.

*Like a baby with a fuckin' bottle*, Henry thought. *He'll get over it. Ain't got no other choice...*

It was late enough that no one was around. There was no way she'd

be home yet. For all Henry knew she was still out cold—he'd hauled off and hit her good and hard at the end. He examined the keys carefully, raking his fingers across their metal teeth. The key to the front door was small and bronze with a square head. He slipped it through the deadbolt, turned the knob, and stepped in.

It was dark. The air inside was warm and smelled vaguely of cinnamon. Henry found his way to the blinds. Only when they were closed did he dare turn on a light. He groped at the lamp-like shape on coffee table until he found the switch. The room lit with an amber glow. It was like stepping into a museum. Every detail of the space suited her, every object promised a sliver of insight into her ego.

She owned three pairs of shoes. In addition to the black boots she always wore there was a pair of white Chuck Taylor high tops, and a second pair of boots—red ones. The leather was soft, the soles caved with wear. Her closet was mostly empty. A long wool coat on one hanger, a leather jacket on another. A plaid scarf. The leather jacket smelled strongly of stale smoke. He wondered how many autumns she'd stood outside in it, cigarette locked between her lips, collar popped up to shield her face from the wind.

Most of her clothes were scattered around a hamper in the corner, dark cottons and denim. He crossed to the pile, picked up a t shirt. 'Christian Death,' it read.

*Some kinda faggy goth shit.*

He could smell her sweat clinging to their fibers: peppery, kind of sweet. There was a small dresser next to the bed. The first drawer was empty. The second held a few pairs of socks. When he opened the third his heart jumped: he'd found her underwear drawer. Henry counted them, rubbed the thin fabric between his fingers. He slipped a pair into his pocket before closing the drawer.

In the bathroom were the staples: toothpaste, a toothbrush, a bottle of aspirin, tampons, rubbing alcohol, dental floss, unscented lotion, deodorant. She used coconut shampoo, no conditioner. A red hairbrush lay on the counter by the sink, dark hair matted in the bristles. There was a tube of mascara, one red-orange lipstick, and a little vile of something called "Egyptian Musk." Carefully Henry

unscrewed the cap, held the bottle under his nose and sniffed. The smell drifted in through his nostrils. *Her* smell.

*God damn...*

There was beer in her fridge—Red Stripe—a six pack with two missing. Eight eggs in a carton, half a loaf of marble rye, a lemon, a lime, a grapefruit, half a stick of butter, a bottle of Valencia hot sauce, a bottle of green Tabasco, a bottle of Red Devil.

*She got three kinds of hot sauce and no fuckin' food.*

She could have had two weeks' worth of groceries in her fridge but it wouldn't have annoyed him any less. It didn't matter what was in her fridge, her drawers, her medicine cabinet; every facet of her existence was as infuriating as it was alluring to him.

It would have taken days to go through her music. The shelves that housed her collection were stark; the wood wasn't treated or sanded particularly well. But they were well-built nonetheless, straight and sturdy. His eyes scanned the labels.

*Punk, Garage, Psych, Folk/Country, Rockabilly, Cold Wave/Synth, Goth/Industrial, Metal...*

This category he examined more closely. He was surprised to find that she had the complete Motorhead discography, as well as Black Sabbath, Slayer, Iron Maiden, and at least thirty more metal bands he'd never heard of.

*Velle Witch, Saint Vitus, Venom, Sepultura, High Risk, Bathory. Jesus fuckin' christ—wonder if she's even listened to half of em'.*

He had a feeling she had. She wasn't the kind of person that would collect music to bolster her image. And, from what he'd seen, she had no one to impress.

Her stereo was a Frankenstein monster of parts and pieces: Kenwood, Casio, Pioneer. The speakers didn't match. There was a tape already loaded in the deck. Henry switched on the receiver and hit 'play.' Heavy drums beat. Guitar rolled in slow. A woman sang, her voice a mixture of strength and softness. The words were familiar.

*"They'll be no strings to bind your hands,  
"Not if my love can't bind your heart.  
"And there's no need to take a stand,  
"For it was I who chose to start.  
"I see no reason to take me home.  
"I'm old enough to face the dawn..."*

He seated himself on the couch. There were Cinnamon Altoids on the coffee table, a book of matches, a pack of Lucky's with one left, two empty glasses that smelled like liquor, six candles nearly burned, an ashtray with remnants of a joint.

*Knew she got high. I knew it.*

He pinched the roach between his thumb and forefinger, took a match from the pack. He managed to get one good hit before it burned up to nothing. He pulled the smoke down deep into his lungs, held it there until he had to breathe.

*"Just call me angel, of the mornin'—angel,  
just touch my cheek before you leave me, baby',  
"Just call me angel, of the mornin'—angel,  
then slowly turn away, from me..."*

The music floated gently to his ears. The hairs on his neck tickled, his eyelids stiffened and drooped.

*Shiiittttt...dunno who she buys from but I oughta' find out...hell of a lot better than the shit I get from Belch...*

Henry settled back into the couch. He imagined she was lying next to him, her head on his shoulder, his arm slung around her. *"Want me to roll another one?"* she'd ask. *Sure*, he'd say. *We got all night. Ain't gotta be home til dawn.* *"We gotta sleep sometime, right?"* she'd say, and look up and him with wide, jade eyes. *Do we?* he'd say. He'd trail his hand up her thigh, slide his fingers under the hem of her shorts. She'd smile sly and bite her lip. *What? You don't want me to?* he'd ask. She'd roll her eyes. *"You know I do. I always do. I'm yours, baby."* He'd smile back, a goofy smile he didn't show to most. *Don't forget it. Cause' I ain't lettin' you go.*

He could taste her on his tongue, feel the warmth of the skin between her thighs, smell the smoke on her clothes and the thick scent of her iron-rich blood.

*“Maybe the sun’s light will be dim,  
so it won’t matter anyhow.*

*“If morning’s echo says we’ve sinned,  
well it was what I wanted now.*

*“And if we’re victims of the night,  
I won’t be blinded by the light...”*

Henry knew he should go. It would be light out soon and he didn’t want to be there when she got home. He’d give her time, let her body heal before he preyed upon it further. When the time was right he’d visit her again. Maybe she’d submit. And if not, well he was more than willing to impart another “lesson.” And another. And another.

*Bitch should be fuckin’ grateful. Who’s gonna love her if I don’t? Who’ll fuck her if I won’t? You stupid bitch—you stubborn fuckin’ cunt. I ain’t done with you.*

Henry unzipped his pants.

*I ain’t lettin’ you go.*

He tugged at his erection. It didn’t take long.

### **Notes for the Chapter:**

FYI for anyone curious the song Henry is listening to in the apartment is the Pretenders cover of 'Angel of the Morning'

## 17. History Repeats Itself

### Summary for the Chapter:

*I do not want, I do not feel  
I've turned inward on myself  
I can't find anything that's real  
But history repeats itself...*

### Notes for the Chapter:

TW: graphic descriptions of bodily harm.

Anyone else going to see chapter 2 tonight?? >:)

Didn't change much here, just cleaned it up a little and changed the chapter title. Chapter title song by AOS.

More coming your way soon. Eternally grateful for comments/kudos <3

**A.O.S - History Repeats Itself**



17.

Sonia Kaspbrak was hysterical. Her face blotched with fat red stress hives, tears beading in the corners of her eyes. She wore a Mumu, pink with lavender hibiscus flowers, white flip flops, short gray socks stretched to capacity around her massive ankles. She clutched her purse to her bosom and squeezed, her index finger aimed like a billiard cue at the nurse behind the counter, who looked genuinely



scared.

"I'm telling you this is a medical emergency!" she wailed, her winy voice shrill and desperate. "My son could have melanoma! *Melanoma!* And you're telling me I have to wait? Do you know how fast those cells can multiply? Do you have any *idea*? Hell did you even go to medical school?!"

Startled, the nurse looked at the woman's son, a small, but healthy-looking boy with wide brown eyes and chestnut hair. He started down at his shoes. The louder his mother got the more he winced.

"So," the nurse said. "you're here because your son has...a mole?"

Sonia's nostrils flared angrily. She looked like a bull about to charge the gate. "Not just *a* mole!" she snapped, snatching up her son's arm and jerking it up to the desk for the nurse to see. "*This* mole!"

The nurse leaned forward and looked. It was barely a freckle.

"Ma'am I don't really understand what-"

"This mole," Sonia interrupted, jerking his arm further and gesturing to it spastically. "was not here yesterday!"

"Yes it was," her son replied futilely. "Totally there mom. Been there forever." If she'd been paying any attention she might have caught the exasperation in his voice.

"I want a biopsy done immediately! I want a blood work! I wanna talk to a specialist!"

"Ma'am," the nurse began, timidly. "it really just looks like a freckle to me."

"Is a freckle," Eddie mumbled, though no one was listening. "Nothin' but a freckle. Harmless freckle. Had it my whole life. Never hurt a soul."

Sonia snorted. "Oh I'm sorry, is that your *professional* opinion? I didn't know nurses could diagnose patients, my *apologies!*" Goopy tears streamed down her cheeks. She brought a hand to her forehead

dramatically, sniffed, bent down to her son. "Eddie, baby, don't you worry. Mommy's gonna take care of this. Why don't you just go sit down over there while I talk to this lady's supervisor." She dug in her purse for a moment and extracted some change. "Here," she said, thrusting the coins at him. "go get yourself a nice soda."

Eddie took the change, smiling grimly. "Ok mom." He turned and trudged off to the vending machines down the hall.

"Diet though Eddie!" she called after him. "You know how too much sugar gives you headaches. Oh, and nothing citrus! Remember honey? Your heartburn?"

"I got it Mom."

Eddie pushed two quarters into the slot, and pressed Diet Doctor Pepper without even looking at the other options. He opened the can and took a sip. All he could taste was aspartame. He took a seat in a vinyl chair, adjusting his fanny pack. He checked his calculator watch, large eyes darting nervously around the room.

"Six in the morning she's doing this now," he mumbled. "Unbelievable."

Once every few months, Sonia Kaspbrak lost her mind. It usually happened when things had been quiet for awhile. His health would be fine, everything going smoothly, and all of a sudden she'd "notice" something. Last month she said he was wheezing and made him get chest x-rays. Before that she claimed his voice sounded different and was convinced he had polyps on his vocal cords. Worst of all was the one time he'd forgotten to flush the toilet and she managed to catch a glimpse of his pee. Kidney stones, she'd insisted, saying over and over again "Normal pee doesn't smell like that Eddie." Now it was the freckle, a tiny, unassuming pinprick of a freckle on his right forearm. He'd gone to bed like normal, woke up to his mother's big face looming over him as she switched on his desk lamp. "I've been up all night worrying Eddie," she croaked, wet-eyed stare like a neglected dog. "We just gotta go get that thing checked or removed or something right now or I know I won't ever sleep again!"

Now here he was, at six AM, staring down at his shoes in the ER

waiting room, drinking chalk soda while his mother chewed out some poor nurse who happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. If Sonia only knew the things he'd been dealing with—if she had even the slightest idea—she wouldn't give two shits about a damn freckle, of that much Eddie was certain. The bags under his large eyes weren't just from waking up early that morning. The truth was he hadn't slept more than a couple hours a night in over a week. And for once it wasn't hypochondria keeping him. It was something else; something much, much worse.

Footsteps interrupted his thoughts. He was grateful for it. He raised his head in their direction, craned his neck to get a better look.

He didn't see her face at first. It was obscured by a mass of dark hair. She leaned over the nurse's desk, leaned *on* it, like she was having a hard time holding herself up. She spoke so quietly Eddie couldn't hear. But he could tell from the nurse's face whatever she said must've been serious. The girl kept her arms curled around her torso, fingers hooked under the sleeves of her dress. The nurse hurried out from behind her post, took off her sweater and draped around the girl's shoulders. When she turned he got a better look at her. He'd seen her before. This was the girl that lived next door to Beverly—the girl she idolized—the girl who had gone head to head with Henry Bowers and left him speechless and bleeding in the Center Street Drugstore parking lot. She'd looked like a lioness then, poised and feral, ready to strike. Now, hunched over, wrapped in the nurse's oversized sweater, she looked like a lost child.

The nurse asked her a few questions. Eddie managed to make out “-help getting to a chair?” The girl shook her head. The next words he heard were “police,” and then “crisis.” The nurse disappeared into the office and the girl slowly made her way to the waiting area. The closer she got, the worse she looked. By the time she managed to lower herself into a seat Eddie could see exactly how bad it was, and it was bad. Her left eye was nearly swollen shut, purple and puckered around a shallow cut that had taken a chunk of her eyebrow with it. Her bottom lip was split and swollen up so big she couldn't close her mouth all the way; he could see blood on her teeth. Her knees and elbows were skinned raw. Her legs were covered in scrapes and scratches. When she reached to move the hair out of her face he saw

the lump on her forehead. It stuck out a good quarter inch from her skull and was lined with a deep gash. Her palms were dusty, her dress torn and dirty.

It was the first time in Eddie's life that he had seen someone so hurt—the first time he'd actually *smelled* blood. It was hard to see, hard to watch. He wanted to do something—to help her somehow. He rose and moved a couple of seats closer to her, leaving only one chair between them. The blood smell was stronger the closer he got. It hung thick in the air, coppery like old pennies.

Eventually she noticed his staring.

"Hey," Eddie said, awkwardly. "How uh—how are you?"

She stared at him, barely managing to raise an eyebrow. Her swollen eye twitched.

"Right," he said quickly. "Right stupid question obviously. But a-are...are you ok?"

She turned away, rubbing her chapped knuckles. "Been better," she whispered.

"You're Bev's neighbor right?" he asked. "You made her that tape? She played it for us. I'm Ed. Edward. Eddie."

She didn't respond.

"What happened to you?" he blurted out, less tactfully than he'd planned.

"None of your fucking business."

Startled, Eddie recoiled a bit.

The girl coughed and winced. She took a shaky breath and said, more gently. "Sorry. But let's be real. You don't wanna know. And I don't wanna tell you."

"Ok. Yeah—that's—that's fair." Eddie's eyes darted wildly. He fidgeted more when he was nervous. He tried not to stare, looked

down. But his eye fell on something he wasn't meant to see. Blood trailed down her leg from under the hem of her skirt. Her thighs were riddled with bruises; swollen welts shaped to fingertips. And just like that a little light bulb went on above his head. He knew. Beyond a shadow of a doubt he knew. A sick sense of remorse washed over him, a guilt he could only attribute to having been born male, sharing the gender of whoever had hurt her that way. He didn't know what to say, only that nothing would help.

"I heard that nurse say she was calling the cops."

"Yeah," she answered bitterly. "I'm really looking forward to talking to *them*."

"I mean, if they can find out who did this--"

"I know who did it."

"You do?"

She looked down. "Yeah."

"Then," Eddie began, timidly. "if you know who did it, then the cops should be able to catch him, right?"

She didn't say anything.

Eddie leaned forward in his seat, tried to catch her eyes. Her lips were trembling, her jaw clamped up tight. She pulled the the sweater up around her shoulders, stretching the fibers until they gaped.

"You're gonna be ok," he said, gently. "You're like the toughest person I've ever seen."

She shook her head. "Not feeling real tough right now."

"Are you kidding me? You are so though," he insisted. "I saw you yesterday at the drug store. I mean, you punched Henry Bowers. *Henry fucking Bowers*, you just decked him right in the face, didn't think twice. I mean if that's not tough I don't know--"

"What did you say?"

Eddie swallowed. “Just...you know...you’re tough.”

“His name—his last name...” She’d suddenly gone so pale the blood on her face looked black.

His meekness rivaled her intensity. “...Bowers? H-Henry Bowers.”

“Bowers,” she whispered, brows furrowed in confusion. “*Bowers*.” She said it again slowly, deliberately, as it was the answer to some long pondered question.

“Yeah Henry Bowers. He’s a senior at my school—pretty much makes everybody miserable.” Eddie tried to fill the crater of discomfort he felt with words. “He’s a real psycho if you ask me—a real asshole. I know this kid Ben—you won’t believe what he did to him-”

“But...Sheriff Bowers...” Her expression coaxed up the tiny hairs on the back of his neck. Her saucer-sized pupil seemed to vibrate with dread. “*Sheriff Bowers*...?” she said again, in a low voice.

“Yeah...th-that’s Henry’s dad.”

She stared in his direction a moment longer, not really looking at him. A tear sailed down her cheek. She didn’t bother to wipe it. “Of course he is,” she rasped. “of course he is.”

Then, to Eddie’s horror, she laughed. It was soft at first. Then deeper, stronger grunts. Her lungs rattled; she lurched forward with every belt.

She stopped suddenly, collapsing into herself. She raked her fingers through her hair and pulled. When she brought her head up there was scarlet thrush around her nose and eyes. Tears had turned some of the blood on her face from dry to wet. She closed her eyes and put her head back against the wall. Then she turned to Eddie. Her mouth hung in a miserable ghost of a smile. That expression would burn itself into Eddie’s memory, and haunt his dreams well into adulthood.

“You seem like a nice kid,” she rasped, glassy eyes downcast. “You should get out of here while you still have that. Leave. Because I swear there’s something in this town that just—just *fucks* with you. Until you can’t put up a fight.” She touched her swollen eye sadly.

“I’m tired of fighting. I’m so fucking tired.”

Eddie was paralyzed. The fine hairs on the back of his neck needled up straight. Her warnings, vague as they were, resonated with uncanny accuracy. He was afraid of her; he was afraid for her. He reached out and gently set his hand on her shoulder. It was the only thing he could think of. She didn’t react to his touch, stared at the ground, unblinking.

When the nurse walked over to them Eddie looked up and met her worried eyes with his own. She had a doctor with her, a turtle-looking man with round glasses and thinning hair. He held a clip board, stethoscope slung round his neck.

The girl sat motionless, her chin to her chest.

“Hon?” the nurse said. “Hon this is Doctor Milton. He’s gonna help you to an exam room.”

“Like hell he is.”

The doctor and nurse exchanged looks. “He’s just gonna help you get settled while we wait for the police.”

“Dana is it?” the doctor spoke up, leaning down. “You can come with me now. The police are on their way.”

She didn’t move.

“No.”

“I’m sorry?” the doctor said, leaning over her further.

“I said no.”

“Would you rather I took you?” the nurse asked, placing a hand on her arm.

The girl’s face flushed with anger. She jerked her arm away as though a tarantula had scuttled across it. “No.”

“Do you wanna wait here for the police sweetie?” the nurse asked.

The doctor looked annoyed.

The girl didn't respond. Instead she put a hand on each of the chair's wooden arms and thrust herself up.

"What are you doing?" The doctor asked.

"Leaving."

He furrowed his brow. "*Excuse me?*"

"Sweetie..." the nurse cooed.

She was up and she was walking—limping rather—towards the door.

"Hon, you need to sit down-" They both followed her. Eddie rose from his seat and took a few steps towards them.

"I'm leaving," she repeated.

"You can't just leave," the doctor exclaimed huffily. "the police are on their way!"

"Call them. Tell them not to come." She continued towards the door.

The doctor reached out, took her shoulder gently. "Miss you need stay here-"

The girl whirled, smacking his hand away with her forearm so hard Eddie heard their bones clap. "Keep your fuckin' hands off me!"

The doctor rubbed his hand. He narrowed his eyes accusingly. "Are you on drugs?"

She sneered. "Sure. Fine. I'm on drugs. Whatever you wanna think—whatever you wanna tell them—I don't care. But I'm leaving. And you better let me go." She backed through the double doors, limping out into the faint morning light. Then she was gone.

When Sonia Kaspbrak returned with a very annoyed doctor she found her son pale and speechless.

"Eddie honey! What's the matter? You see doctor? You see! I told you



he was sick. Just look at him! What is it Eddie? Talk to Mommy, won't you? Eddie! Talk to me!"

Eddie just stared at her. He was neither willing nor able to convey to her what had taken place. It was then that his mother noticed the little pool of ruby liquid congealed on the seat two chairs over.

"Oh my god!" she screeched, pulling him from his chair by the wrist and taking him firmly by the shoulders. "Is that your blood? Is it Eddie? Answer me! Is it?"

"No Mom," Eddie said quietly. "it's someone else's."

## 18. I'm Getting Tired

### Summary for the Chapter:

*I'm getting kind of tired now,  
cause' I've carried quite a load  
I don't know which way I'm going,  
I'm just going, where i go  
Heavy dewdrops,  
fall to drink,  
Silver minutes,  
time to think,  
I'm ready to go now*

### Notes for the Chapter:

TW:

attempted suicide, crippling depression/suicidal thoughts, mental coercion/manipulation, substance abuse.

This is a very dark one, please stay safe and read at your own risk. Hope you like the changes i made <3

Chapter title song by Lynn Castle.

**I'm Getting Tired**



18.

Her legs moved, one foot in front of the other, until she was climbing the steps to her floor. The only thing she noticed was thirst, her mouth like chalk.

She kept a spare key under the doormat. As she bent to get it she noticed the trail of blood that marked her route, dotting the stairs behind her. She wondered how far back it went. Did it lead all the way to the hospital? And the bar before that? She'd always felt like

Derry had tainted her in some way; kind of fitting that she should stain it in return.

She made it inside and dragged herself to the shower. Pain hissed as she bent to turn it on. She peeled off what was left of her funeral dress, stepped over the edge of the tub. The water invaded her cuts and welts, beat down on her bruises. She leaned against the wall, sunk back into the corner balled small. Rust-red liquid twisted down the drain. Eventually the skin on her fingers and toes wrinkled and the water wasn't hot anymore.

Dana tended her wounds like a plumber patching grout, efficient and without softness. She went to the hamper, pulled a dirty t shirt from it and slid it over her head. Then to the kitchen. Dana ran water from the tap, opened her mouth and drank from the stream. The tilted angle made her woozy, made her head feel weighted on one side. She drank and drank, her throat bobbing with liquid volume. But she was still thirsty.

*"Water will not sate your thirst..."* whispered a voice, faint and soft. The words floated through the air to her ears. *"You've hidden something, haven't you? Hidden it under your sink? Something that will make you feel better."* There was a vaporous quality to it. It was everywhere and nowhere both, in her head and outside of it.

"I'm not supposed to," she found herself saying back. Her eyes locked on the cabinet door.

*"Oh now,"* cooed the voice. *"what harm can come from just a sip? To numb your aching bones, make hazy your pain."*

The final threads of her sanity were strained to capacity. But Dana was too tired to confront or question. Kneeling slowly she put her hands on the cabinet to steady herself. She pulled back the doors, shoving aside trashcan, bleach, and roach bombs. The bottle of tequila glowed like topaz in the chest of a sunken vessel. It seemed to radiate warmth, the promise of comfort.

*"There we are; your salvation. Go ahead, drink it."*

She sat at the table with the bottle in front of her like a meal, poured

herself an inch.

The voice cooed in her ear. *"You won't get much relief from that little bit, now will you?"*

She splashed a little more into the cup and set the bottle down.

*"Not quite,"* the voice hissed. This time she felt hot breath on her neck. And the bottle was lifted, tipped into the glass, spilling its contents over the rim. Hands held it, white gloved hands. Arms snaked from behind her, clothed in shimmering silver sleeves. Their shadows danced across the tabletop. She watched the hands set the bottle down gently, lift the cup towards her in offering. *"Drink,"* It said softly. *"drink up now, and put your pain to bed."*

Dana took the cup, watched the powdered hands retract, the arms fold away. She accepted the hands just as she had the voice, with a sort of grim concern that she was too weak to investigate. Whether they were real or not was irrelevant now. She wasn't afraid. Nothing mattered.

Head tilted back, she drank in gulps, drank until she gagged. The booze swam through her vein's channels, filled her body with heat. She set the glass down and exhaled. She could see her breath turn to fog. Her apartment had gone cold as a crypt. The frigid air ached her bones, budded her bruises with goose bumps. She could feel the pain of each wound; every cell screaming in agonizing unison.

*"Not working?"* The voice returned, strained with sympathy. *"Poor little thing. So much suffering. So much pain. Here, these will help."* The hands returned, one at either side as before. *"Hold out your hand."*

She did as she was told, no hesitation. Her arm trembled, dread in her dreamy eyes. A gloved hand dropped a cluster of white pills into her palm. It folded her fingers down over them, gently guiding her hand to her face.

*"Th—that's too many—"*

*"They will help you,"* the voice rasped coaxingly. *"Take it all away. No more suffering at the hands of others. No more fear. You'll be warm. And*

*safe. And you'll rest."*

Dana stared at the pills. "Is this really what it's come to?" she asked, vacant voice aimed at no one. "Is this it?"

*"Why do you hesitate?"* asked the voice. *"What happiness waits for you in this world? What kindness?"*

She had no answer.

*"Your future holds only suffering. Over and over again will your body ravaged to ruin at the hands of men."*

Her eyes welled. One of the hands lifted to her face, thumb dragged across her cheek to catch the tears. Its touch burned ever so slightly.

*"But,"* it continued. *"you can change it. Take control of your destiny. Abandon your body, so that no man may defile it."*

Dana's breathing hitched. The pills gleamed like pearls on a warm beach.

The arms reached to take up tequila again. Gently, they lifted Dana's hand, closing her fingers around the neck of the bottle.

*"Time heals nothing,"* the voice croaked. *"Lay down your life, and no man can take it from you."*

It was a benevolent option. So urgently clear now that she couldn't believe she hadn't thought of it on her own. No more bad dreams—no more hiding. To just be done, to be finished. She closed her eyes, bringing her hand to her lips. The pills were bitter. She swallowed quick. They wormed their way down her throat. She chased them with the remaining liquor. And the bottle was empty. And her palm was empty.

*"There you are,"* the voice sung sweetly. *"So eager for death. Soon, you'll have your wish."*

Rising, Dana staggered from her chair. The empty bottle swung from her limp arm. The room was spinning. The walls breathed and flexed as darkness blinded her. A familiar smell drifted through her nostrils,

sour and stale. She fell into the floor, fell through it into the cavity between the wallpaper, the endless span of depth, moldy black mouth. There was no reality to separate her any longer. The shapes inside it danced and called her name. Alone, ready to receive them, she closed her eyes and crawled through the breach.

## 19. Youth Nabbed As Sniper

### Summary for the Chapter:

*Black top burns with silent screams,  
others stop my dreams  
Lightning crash! crash! crash!  
fear causes some to live, others die real cool.  
I died in the evening after school*

### Notes for the Chapter:

Very Loser-heavy Chapter, slight mods but nothing too major. Hope you enjoy <3

Chapter song title by Blondie

**Youth Nabbed As Sniper**





19.

Beverly waited until her father left for work to duck outside, anxious to thank Dana for the tape. She wanted to tell her she'd listened to the whole thing—tell her which songs were her favorites—ask her about a few of the bands. She knew she was home, heard her door slam before the sun was even up. She knocked but there was no answer. She knocked again. Still nothing. Beverly sighed, head drooped in disappointment. She was about ready to give up and go back inside but something on the ground caught her eye. Dark drops

scattered the balcony. Her eyebrows creased and she knelt to get a better look: they led from the top of the steps directly to Dana's door. Beverly peered down the stairway. The trail spanned as far down the stairs as she could see, maybe beyond them.

She swallowed. Nausea burned in her stomach. Her heartbeat leapt to catch her racing thoughts.

*It's blood—it has to be blood, right? —Dana's blood. Why would Dana be bleeding? Is she still bleeding? I know she's in there. Why won't she answer? Maybe she's asleep? Maybe I wasn't loud enough?*

Morning sun sizzled the back of her neck as she rapped on the door. "Dana?" she called. "Dana?" She balled her fist tight, thwacked harder against the veneer. "Dana! I know you're in there—Dana?" She tried to see in through the windows but the blinds were turned and the only gap they left was too high to reach.

"You o-k-kay, B-Bev?"

Beverly turned to find Bill standing behind her, his eyes wells of worry.

"Bill," she said, flustered. "I—I thought we were meeting at your place—"

"W-w-we were," he said. "It's j-j-just that—w-well Eddie s-s-said—"

"Eddie?" Commotion on the stairs drew her eye. She leaned over the balcony and looked down to see the rest of her friends climb up the stairs. Eddie was in the lead, his tiny legs stretched to take two steps at a time. He reached the top struggling for breath, the others close behind. Beverly looked at the group. Her brows furrowed in confusion. "Ok—what's going on? Why are you all here?"

"Ask Eddie," Richie said, annoyed. "he's the one freaking out."

Eddie shot Richie a spiteful stare. If he wasn't still catching his breath he'd have surely fired one back at him.

"T-tell her Eddie," Bill urged. "Tell her what you t-t-told us."

Beverly looked to him expectantly. “Well?”

Eddie sipped air, straightening up. His eyes darted from Bill, to Beverly, to Dana’s door, then back to Beverly again. “I think...I think your neighbor-”

“Dana?”

“Dana...” He said her name carefully, like it was somehow poisonous. “I think she might be in trouble...”

Beverly swallowed. “Why? What do you mean?”

“Look,” he began. “my mom took me to the ER last night—some crazy shit about a freckle. Anyway, while I’m waiting your neighbor walks in. She was all bloody—it-it looked like someone beat her up—like *bad*...”

“Well, what happened?”

“She didn’t say exactly—but—”

“But what?”

“I think it was Bowers,” he blurted out. He tugged open the zipper of his fanny-pack, rifled through the plastic contents like a squirrel digging for nuts. “She kept saying his name,” he went on. “over and over again like it—like it *meant* something.”

“What else did she say?” Beverly demanded.

Eddie extracted his inhaler and took two puffs before he continued. “Some weird shit about Derry. Weird, but like it—it almost made sense. She said that there’s something wrong here.” He closed his eyes, trying to remember her words verbatim. “That ‘this town fucks with you, until you can’t fight it.’”

“Well that’s fuckin’ uplifting,” Richie said, uneasiness in his voice.

“Shut up Richie,” Beverly snapped. “Keep going Eddie.”

“She left—told the doctor to call off the cops, freaked out and just

left.” Eddie looked up at Beverly, eyes wide and frantic. “Sh-she was really hurt Bev,” he said quietly. “There was so much blood and—and she—she didn’t sound right. And—and I dunno I just—have you seen her? Has she been around?”

“I heard her come in. I haven’t seen her. Then, I saw this...” Beverly pointed to the ground. The group looked down, seeing for the first time the ruby trail that peppered the landing.

Bill’s jaw dropped. “I-is that b-b-b-blood?”

“I think so,” Beverly said. “It leads right to her door. That’s how I know. She’s in there.”

“Maybe she’s on the rag,” Richie offered and regretted it almost immediately.

Eddie stared at him, incredulous. “Seriously? *Seriously* Richie?”

“It was just a joke...”

“Does this *seem* like a funny situation right now? Does it Richie? Huh? *Does* it?”

Richie shrugged. “No but—you guys are getting yourselves all worked up. That chick’s tough, she can take care of herself.”

“You didn’t see her,” Eddie said gravely. “You don’t know how bad it was.”

Richie rolled his eyes. “Maybe she’s asleep; *maybe* she’s not even home. Or, maybe she is—maybe she’s got a guy in there with her...or a girl...” He raised himself on his toes, craned his neck to see inside.

Beverly whirled, landing a punch to his shoulder. “Knock it off Richie!”

“Ow! The fuck was that for?”

Beverly ignored him. “Look, Eddie’s right—something’s going on—something’s wrong...”

“So what do we do?” Ben asked. He’d never seen Beverly so shaken, so clearly afraid. It worried him.

Beverly was quiet a minute. She looked at the door. Her heart felt like an elevator plummeting down its shaft: cables snapped, gravity dragging it with merciless speed. Without thinking she grabbed the doorknob and twisted. To her surprise, it turned. She put her shoulder to the door and pushed. It swung open a few inches catching on the chain latch. She pulled at it, crouched, her face flush with the gap. Her eyes poured over the dim interior. Searching, until they landed on just what she’d hoped to God she wouldn’t see.

“Oh my god...”

“She in there?” Eddie asked, panic rising in his voice.

“She’s on the floor! She’s not moving!” Beverly tugged savagely at the door, rattling the chain in its backing. “We have to get in!”

It was Mike now who rushed to the door, grabbing the width of the side and pulling to test the chain’s strength. “Your dad got a tool box?” he asked, gripping the chain and giving it a good yank.

“Uh—yeah, I think so.”

“See if he’s got a pair of bolt cutters in it.”

Beverly nodded and dashed into her apartment.

The boys crowded the door. Eddie clambered to the front, crouched and peered through the opening. He saw the empty bottle first, glowing like crystal. Then he saw her hand, pale and motionless, fingers long and graceful, white against the dark floorboards. She lay on her side hair gathered around her face, bare legs outstretched. Her face was serene despite the bruising; her mouth parted ever so slightly, pearly eyelids gently shut.

“Oh shit,” he murmured. “Shit.”

Beverly reemerged, her cheeks flushed. She held out the heavy tool and Mike took it from her. He brought the bolt cutters to the chain, wedged the links between the blades and squeezed. It took a few

seconds but the chain succumbed, shooting shards of metal as it snapped. He palmed the door and it opened.

“Oh no,” Beverly whispered. She moved inside quickly, dropping to her knees and putting a hand on Dana’s arm. “Dana!” she cried, shaking her. “Dana!” She lowered her ear to Dana’s face and listened, felt for breath. There was nothing but the cold, still air that labeled their proximity. “She’s not breathing!”

“Feel for a pulse!” Eddie stammered, dropping down beside her as the others began to gather around.

Dana’s skin was cool but still soft, a good sign. Beverly felt nothing.

“No pulse! What do we do?” She took Dana’s face in her hands, cupped her bruised cheeks. “Dana!” she screamed, shaking her. “Dana!”

“Maybe we should slap her?” Richie offered, his face somber.

“Richie sh-shut the fuck up!” Bill stuttered, kneeling at Dana’s side.

“I’m trying to help!” Richie shot back.

“CPR! Does anyone know CPR?” Ben cried.

“I do! I know it,” Eddie said. “but I-I can’t do it.”

Beverly gawked at him. “Why?”

“I-I’m not strong enough ok! My mom made me take the class at the Y last year—I could barely fucking make a dent on the dummy they made us practice on let alone a real chest on a real person!”

“I’ll do it,” she said “just tell me what to do.”

“You’re not exactly He-Man either Bev,” Eddie rattled off, dark eyes darting around the group. “Mike,” he said finally. “Mike’s the strongest.”

Mike froze, a deer caught in headlights. “I can’t.”

“It’s easy—I’ll walk you through it,” Eddie stammered.

Beverly looked at him, pleading. Her bottom lip trembled. “Mike...please...”

He sighed. “Tell me what to do.”

“Ok—flip her on her back!”

Mike crouched, put a hand on Dana’s shoulder and rolled her over gently.

“Ok—now—now y-you sit on top of her, and you put your hands on her chest—go—go’head Mike.”

Eddie’s words came out so fast Mike had to strain to make them out. He eased his weight onto her as carefully as he could, settling just above her hips. Reaching out, he rested his hands below her collarbone. He couldn’t have looked more uncomfortable.

“Here?”

“A little lower—toward—towards the middle. There! Right there—yeah. Good. Ok...” Eddie took as deep a breath as he could manage, kneeling parallel to Mike. “now you’re gonna do—chest compressions—you’re gonna do thirty pumps—two per second—and then—then you’re gonna hold her nose, tilt her head, and-and blow into her mouth two times. You got that?”

“Uh...I dunno...” Mike’s palms had started to sweat.

“You got this Mike—I’ll count with you. Ready?”

He nodded. “Ok.”

“Ok...and...” Eddie raised his calculator watch, counting down the seconds. “go! One—two—three—”

Mike pushed. He felt the tension of her ribs under his hands careful not to crack them. He pumped while Eddie counted, face locked in concentration. Beverly took Dana’s hand in her and squeezed. She silently mouthed the numbers along with them.

“twenty- eight—twenty-nine—thirty! Ok, pinch her nose now—head back—tilt her head back!”

Mike did as instructed, cupping her chin. He covered her nose, brought his mouth to hers, and blew. He could taste the liquor on her cold lips. His stomach twirled but he blew, first one breath, then a second.

“Ok—ok—give it a second—just wait—just wait a second!” Eddie tilted his face over Dana’s, listening.

“How long does it take?” Beverly asked.

Eddie shushed her, lowering his ear to Dana’s lips. He could swear he heard a noise in her throat, a tiny strain in her vocal cords. When she suddenly coughed, he nearly jumped out of his skin, recoiling and audibly gasping. Eyes shut, she struggled to breath. Her jaw locked, torso lurching forward as she gagged. It sounded like she was drowning.

“She’s choking!” Stan shouted.

Eddie launched into action. “Here—flip her over—put her on her side!”

Mike took her shoulders and pulled her onto her right side. Dana sputtered, opened her mouth and expelled an impossibly long jet of vomit. Neon orange soared across the room, narrowly missing Richie’s legs.

“Holy shit!” he cried, jerking out of its path.

“That’s good,” Eddie said, patting her back as she expelled another bile rope. “There ya go. That’s good, get it out—get it all out.”

Beverly smoothed Dana’s hair, gathering the loose strands away from her face.

Many of the pills were still whole when they came out.

“Jesus...” Richie murmured.



She wretched until she was empty. Her throat calloused, her heaving voice gravelly and thin. She looked up. Her eyes slowly focusing on the group around her.

"Dana?" Beverly said softly. "Are you ok? Say something..."

But all Dana could manage was a hoarse, one-word response.

"...fuck."

### **Notes for the Chapter:**

From here on out those of you who read the original story will notice a lot of changes. I'm mixing things up drastically (and, I think, for the better). Hope ya'll enjoy the ride. Thank you so so much for reading, comments, kudos, feedback, and encouragement.

Next chapter coming your way soon!

xxx00xxx000x0

## 20. Reflections

### Summary for the Chapter:

*It's not my place but I don't like it,  
there's nothing wrong but nothing's right  
You can't explain but you cant fight it,  
I'm too far gone; it's not last night...*

*I'd like some space but I cant find it,  
I can't take trips; my life's a bore  
I have no words so I can't write it,  
Can't tell the ceiling from the floor...*

### Notes for the Chapter:

Hey everyone :)))

sorry this one took me so long! good news is it's a *lonnnnnnnngggggggggg* one. I hope you like it! Thank you for reading, kudos, comments. You know I appreciate it ;)

chapter song title by Screaming Sneakers  
xxxooo

**Screaming Sneakers - Reflections**



20.

“How many did you take?”

“I don’t know.”

“What were they? Where’d you get them?”

“I had them I guess. I don’t know.”

They surrounded her, distanced safely. Only Beverly was within arm's reach. She crouched beside Dana on the floor, her head bent as she spoke. Her face bore the look of a mother weakened with worry. She tried to meet her eyes but Dana wouldn't raise hers from the floor. "How do you feel?" she asked.

Dana swallowed. "Like shit."

Her voice was tinny. It sounded like she'd been gargling battery acid.

"You should drink some water," Beverly coaxed.

Dana didn't move. Her jaw hung agape, swollen lips parted. Slowly she lifted her chin, raked her open eye over the boys. "What's with them?"

"I was supposed to meet up with them. But Eddie said he saw you at the hospital and—well he was worried something was up."

Dana was silent. She aimed her eye at the little squirrely one. He blushed cinnamon and looked down.

"W-w-what are you gonna d-do?" asked the Denborough boy gently.

"I don't know." Her response to every question.

"But," Beverly continued. "you know who did this to you?"

"Yeah."

"Was it Bowers?" Stanley asked. All awaited her response but she had none. She looked at Stanley, daggers funneled through the pupil of her good eye. She grimaced.

"Henry Bowers?" Beverly pressed. "Eddie—he said—"

"I'm not gonna talk about this. I *can't* talk about this." Her hands shook, fingers coiled into fists. She looked down.

"It might help," she said softly. "We want to help."

Dana's lips curled in anger. "Think you've done enough."

Beverly felt like she'd been sucker punched. She swallowed her hurt, hardening her face as best she could. "What are you gonna do?"

"I can't do anything."

"You can go to the cops," Beverly said sternly. "Tell them what happened. Get Henry locked up."

"Don't start up with that," Dana warned. She was getting to her feet. Her face twisted in pain as she rose.

"She's right," Eddie said. "you've gotta tell someone. I know it—it's hard—but—"

"Do you?" she hissed. "Please, by all means, why don't you tell me how hard it is?"

This time Richie intervened. "Hey he's just trying to help. We all are."

"I didn't *ask* for your help."

"Yeah?" he shot back angrily. "Well seeing as you'd be dead without it, maybe you should have."

"Richie stop!" Beverly commanded. She turned back to Dana, eyes wide and imploring. "Bowers has to pay for what he did to you. The cops—it's the only way to—"

"God *grow up!* Cops don't care! They don't give a shit! Jesus Christ—his dad's the fucking *sheriff* Beverly—who do you think *made* him so fucked up?" Her shoulders arched, dark hair spiked wild. She looked like startled cat, claws out.

"You could go to someone else," Beverly insisted. "another officer. You could tell them—"

"Don't you understand that it doesn't *matter*? They're all the same—*all of them!*" Force cracked her voice, made her chest heave. "Cops take care of their own—they're like the mafia—like—like a fucking *cult!* It wouldn't matter who I went to—they'd burry it!" She struggled for air, dug at the cramp splintering her side. "It doesn't

matter what happens to trash in this town,” she panted. “No one cares.”

Beverly took a step towards her. “You are not trash.”

Dana emitted a dry laugh, air wheezing from her lungs. “Look at me!” She gestured at the vomit pond on the floor, the empty tequila bottle. “My life is a fucking *joke!*” When she finally looked Beverly in the eye it was pure mania that greeted her. “You shouldn’t have stopped me.”

Beverly shook her head. Her cheeks flushed with anger. “You don’t mean that.”

“I’m no fucking good!” Dana cried. Her eyelid stretched back, popped vessels stark against round white. “I’m fucked! I’m—I—I can’t fucking do it!” Her features crinkled, bruised skin budding up against cuts and welts. “I’m sorry—I just can’t! I’m fucked! I can’t do it! Just please—please go—please! Please just go away—I can’t—” Dana clawed into her sides, torso slumped forward. Her brain was on fire, lungs fought for air. Her legs caved. She swayed and collapsed, knees butting the floor.

Beverly managed to catch her arm under the shoulder and tugged back. “Help me!” she cried.

Mike rushed to take her other arm, shifting most of her weight onto him. “I’ve got her.”

“Help me get her to the couch!”

They laid her down as gently as they could. Beverly covered her with one of the afghans she found draped on the sofa. Unconscious, Dana’s breathing regulated. Soon she was taking in air deep and constant.

Richie eyed Dana uneasily. “What’s wrong with her?” he asked.

“It’s a panic attack,” Eddie said, adjusting the blanket. “It’s what happened to me when that—that fucking leper chased me. It’s like asthma only worse because it’s in your head; an inhaler won’t fix it.” He scratched his head, chewed at his bottom lip. “Ok, we need to divide and conquer right now.” His eyes flashed across the

apartment, scanning his friends one at a time. “Bill go get a cool towel for her head. Stanley you go see what kinda disinfectants she’s got in the bathroom, bring everything out here. Mike, Bev, you’re on bandage duty with me. Ben, go see if she’s got anything in the fridge—she should eat when she wakes up. Richie—clean up the throw-up.”

Richie groaned. “Seriously? You’re over there playing doctor and you put me on barf duty?”

“Yeah that’s right Richie you get barf duty because you’ve literally been a dick since we got here ok so why don’t you shut the fuck up and do it already?”

Richie raised his eyebrows, hands up defensively. “Jesus alright, don’t you go having a fuckin’ panic attack.” He stomped off in search of paper towels.

Bill emerged from the kitchen with a damp rag, which Eddie promptly jerked from his hands and carefully refolded. He dabbed Dana’s temple before gently resting it on her forehead.

“Are you sure it was a panic attack?” Beverly asked, coming to stand behind him.

“I think so. I mean—it—it might be a combination of things; head trauma, dehydration, blood loss. But yeah—I think she passed out because she couldn’t breathe—from, you know, panic.”

She swallowed. She was trying hard not to let the others notice how shaken she was. Seeing Dana fall apart was like watching a mountain crumble into the ocean.

“Y-y-you ok?” Bill asked. He always had an uncanny way of reading her mind.

“I’m fine,” she lied.

Dana didn’t keep much in the way of bandages and her antiseptic selection consisted of hydrogen peroxide and some dried up Neosporin. Thankfully, Eddie came prepared. He pulled an assortment of ointments and creams from his fanny-pack, as well as

disinfectant wipes and half a roll of gauze. He, Mike, and Beverly did their best to tend to Dana's wounds, cleaning and bandaging the worst of them. Apart from the occasional groan Dana slept through it. One time she swatted at Mike when he hit a particularly raw spot on her elbow.

Richie wiped up the vomit with exaggerated effort, grumbling under his breath and throwing shade at whoever happened to look his way. Ben scoured the kitchen but couldn't find anything substantial enough to cook. He and Stan took a quick trip to the super market to pick up some provisions. They returned with two cans of soup, bread, and a jar of applesauce.

Ben let the soup simmer on the stove. He peered at Dana over the back of the couch. "Should we try to wake her up?" he asked.

Eddie shook his head. "Better to let her sleep til she wakes up on her own."

"Sooo...." Richie said. "Should we...like...go now?"

No one said anything. Beverly watched as Eddie lifted the cold compress from Dana's forehead and raked it across her bangs. He dabbed gently at her eyebrows and the bruised flesh above her jaw.

"I'm staying with her," she said, eyes kept on her sleeping friend.

"H-how long you g-g-gonna stay?" Bill asked.

"Long as it takes."

"Seriously Bev?" Richie piped up. "After all that shit she said? It's pretty fuckin' obvious she doesn't want you here."

"I don't care. I'm not just gonna leave her to..."

"To what?" Richie raised an eyebrow. "You think she...might try again?"

"Nice," Eddie said pointedly. "Real nice. It's called tact—*tact* Richie."



Richie mumbled an awkward ‘sorry,’ and looked down at his shoes.

“I’m staying too,” Eddie said.

“Won’t your mom be worried?” Beverly asked.

“I’ll call her. Make something up.”

They agreed to meet up the following morning, resume their plan. The boys trickled out one at a time. Mike was the last to go. He offered to stay along with them but Beverly insisted he’d better not.

“I don’t want her to feel like there’s an audience when she wakes up.”

---

They stood watch while she slept. Beverly straightened the afghan periodically, tucking it back around her shoulders. Eddie saw to it that her towel stayed cool and fresh. When she stirred from sleep he and Beverly coaxed her to take a few sips of water before she passed out again.

It was nearing 5pm. The sun fell through the blinds like a white blade. She first became aware of a pleasant, savory smell in the air. It was reminiscent of childhood, being sick and home from school. Her body hurt badly. Wounds inside and out throbbed as she shifted onto her side. Her head ached with heaviness but felt somehow hollow too.

“Hey—she—she’s waking up!”

“Dana? Dana? Can you hear me?” a voice said softly.

“I can hear you,” she murmured.

She peeled her eyes open with some difficulty, crusted as they were with sleep and blood. She recognized Beverly but the boys face took longer to recall. Dana struggled to sit up, confused. Why were these kids in her apartment? Why did she hurt so? Why wouldn't her left eye open? She raised her hand to it, touched her eyebrow gently. All at once the flashback came, crude and sudden as a slap to the face. First the assault in all its brutality; the clown's delight from the back of the Trans Am; the sounds Henry made when he thrust into her over, and over. She could hear his threats, feel the cool blade of his knife on her thigh and his fist strike her temple hard enough to make her sleep. She remembered the emergency room; the horror of her realization. She remembered how she'd dragged herself home; the agonizing shower; gulping tequila like precious water in the Sahara; the voice coaxing her to self-slaughter; the gloved hands, the pills they offered. And then the darkness, waking to sickness, purging the poison she'd ingested, the fear on the faces of kids that came to her aid. And her anger; the venom and cruelty of her words; the anguish she suffered at the prospect of survival. The images exploded in her brain, bright and vivid as fireworks. The sob that had been trapped inside of her rose steadily through her chest like an elevator. Dana shielded her face, and wept.

Beverly was ready. She pulled Dana to her warmth, arms wrapped tight around her shoulders. Her fingers combed Dana's tangled hair as she rocked her, saying over and over "It's ok. I got you."

---

"Make sure she changes the bandages every twelve hours—especially the ones on her knees. I left another roll of gauze next to the lamp on the table. Two ibuprofen with food every four hours for the swelling. Cold compress is fine—just no ice directly on anything." Eddie stood at Dana's door, spewing care instructions a mile a minute as he

handed Beverly the contents of his fanny-pack.

“Got it,” she said, trying to juggle the travel-sized bottles of rubbing alcohol and witch hazel.

“And—and water—make sure she drinks plenty of water.”

“I got it Eddie.”

“twelve ounces every two hours is ideal for someone recuperating from — ”

“Eddie! I got it.”

His eyes darted and he looked down. “Yeah...yeah ok—right.”

“You’ve been amazing,” she said truthfully. “I can’t thank you enough.”

A shy smile flickered on his face

“But for now,” she went on. “I think maybe it’s best if...”

“I get it. I wouldn’t want to be around boys either.” Guilt gnawed at him something fierce, weighing him down like stones in his pockets. It was the same shame he’d felt in the ER: personal liability for the disease of mean. He left with his hands in his pockets, tears shone in corners of his eyes. They stung when the wind blew.

---

Beverly portioned soup into a bowl. Dana couldn’t bring herself to eat, not yet. Still she accepted the offering; the heat felt good to hold. She sat on the couch, blanket stretched over her lap. Beverly in the armchair across from her.

"You should get home," Dana said suddenly.

"My dad won't be home for a couple hours."

Dana was quiet. She stared down into the well of chicken and wild rice drifting between her palms.

Shifting uncomfortably, Beverly sighed and looked down. "I know you don't want me here," she said quietly. "I get it. I do. It's just that—well I—I'm afraid that—"

"I'm not gonna try again if that's what you're getting at," she said suddenly.

"You're not?"

"I'm not."

"You promise?" Beverly asked, studying her gravely.

"Yeah."

There was a plainness to the way she said it, a sense of transparency that soothed her worries. At least for the time being.

"I'm sorry for earlier."

Startled, Beverly looked at her. She leaned forward in her chair, ears strained to hear Dana's voice, not much above a whisper. "You don't have to apologize..."

"Yeah I do. Shit was fucked up. On a lot of levels." She chewed at her lip out of habit, forgetting momentarily about the gash that split it. Wincing, she muttered a curse and brought her thumb to it. She sat for several minutes, thumb pressed to the wound. She stared back at the soup in her lap. The broth had started to separate. Neon orange beads of fat bubbled to the surface. "I just got tired of it," she said, without really meaning to.

"Tired of what?"

"Being fucked with."

Beverly rose from the chair. Cautiously, she approached. “You mean, Bowers?”

“This town has been messing with me since I was a kid. He's just a brick in the wall.”

“And the Sheriff?”

“Like father like son I guess,” Dana rasped bitterly.

Beverly looked at her, curiosity creasing her brow. “Is that what you meant when you said you had a ‘history’ with cops?”

“He picked me up when I was eighteen. He told me I had a ‘choice’...” Malice darkened her face. She didn’t need to say anything else. Beverly understood the same way Dana had that morning. She took Dana’s hand, careful not to graze the raw spots on her knuckles.

“I never told anyone,” Dana continued. “Cause’ like, who would I tell? When your friend told me he was Henry’s *dad*...it was just too much.” She closed her eyes and inhaled, steadied her breathing before she began to speak again. “I couldn’t deal with it—I just—I don’t know...” Dana brought her palm to her forehead, clawing a hand through her hair like she’d lost something in it. “I think there’s something wrong with me.”

“What do you mean?” Beverly asked.

Dana shook her head helplessly. “I don’t know like—like I don’t even know what’s real half the time. I’ve been seeing things—weird things.” She seemed lost, face locked in concentration. Her unblinking eye scoured the air around her for answers. “This is so fucked up,” she murmured. “I shouldn’t even be telling you—”

“No,” Beverly interrupted. Her grip tightened on Dana’s hand, eyes lighting urgently. Dread weighted her features, made them sink.

The question was one Beverly had half-asked before: the night she heard the noises float through their shared wall. Even when Dana dismissed them as music Beverly knew; she knew no human could make those sounds. That night she’d seen the wildness in Dana’s eyes, the cold pallor of fear washed over her face.

Leaning in further, Beverly closed the proximity between them.

“Did you see the clown?”

### **Notes for the Chapter:**

One of my biggest regrets with the original story was how I handled Dana's character development after the assault. I feel like her rehabilitation was rushed as the story started to wrap up. I hope to remedy that in the edits.

There's gonna be a lot of new chapters along the way and I think the story will wind up being quite a bit longer than the original with a completely different ending. Lots of new Bowers Gang content coming your way too! Working hard to get them posted soon  
<3

## 21. Nausea

### Summary for the Chapter:

*Nausea*  
*Bloody red eyes go to*  
*Nausea*  
*Bloody red eyes go to*  
*Nausea*  
*Bloody red eyes go to*  
*Nausea*  
*Bloody red eyes go to sleep*

### Notes for the Chapter:

Ready for a bunch of chapters? hope so :)

Trying out some new formatting stuff for these next few. I tried to be really clear with the timeline but just to clarify:

shit went down with the Bowers Gang on Monday night after Dana worked her shift at the bar. The next few chapters take place the following days--I think it ends up being like eight or nine days to be exact--while she's locked in her apartment kind of trying to process things. I may end up moving things around a little bit so that it's easier to follow.

Chapter title song by X, enjoy the holiday lil babes

And you know comments/kudos would just absolutely make my day ;)

**X Nausea**



*“Did you see the clown?”*

*“...how could you possibly know that?”*

*“Because I’ve seen it too. We all have...my friends and me....”*

*“What is it?”*

*“We don’t know. But we think it’s been taking kids...”*



Now the question looped through Dana's brain like a figure 8.

*Did you see the clown? Did you see the clown?*

She'd felt some relief at first. She wasn't crazy. There were others that saw what she'd seen. But the existence of the thing came with a price. Whoever—whatever—It was, It was making people disappear; taking children. Which made Dana wonder: if this thing had a penchant for kids, why then did It present itself to her? Pedophiles took advantage of children's' vulnerability. Maybe this thing had a similar agenda; maybe It looked for easy prey. Is that what she was?

*"Be careful,"* Beverly warned. *"It knows what you're afraid of. It wants you to be scared."*

**Tuesday PM, July 28th**

She slept. Her phone rang. She ignored it. It rang again. She ignored it. It rang again. She tore out the chord. It sparked. She went back to sleep.

**Wednesday AM, July 29th**

Pain woke her every few hours. It took all her willpower to overcome it. Her eyelids would snap open, pulse beating like she'd sprinted a mile. But it was too hard to be awake. It was too hard to know that her shift at the bar had started without her. It was too hard to get up and feed herself though her guts knotted with emptiness. It was too hard to go to the bathroom and risk catching a glimpse of herself in the mirror. Instead she coaxed sleep back again, and again, and

again, until it finally refused her.

The sun was low in the sky and the date on the clock informed another day had passed. Dana lifted herself off the couch. Aches and pains responded accordingly to her movement. Her stomach churned with hunger, a gnawing like she'd never felt. The glass on the table was empty though she had no recollection of drinking the water in it. It took more work than it should have to determine that she'd slept for the better part of two days. She hadn't been to the bathroom. She hadn't eaten. She'd barely drank.

The apartment was hot. She went to the kitchen window and pulled. The angle tore open the thick scab on her elbow. She hissed and let the window fall. She blotted paper towels into the blood, looked around for something better. There was an assortment of supplies on the coffee table, tidily arranged.

*Kids must've brought them.*

She wound some gauze around her elbow, trying hard to keep her eyes off the wound. She didn't want to see anymore of her own blood; the iron tang made her ill.

*I could sleep more, she thought. If I just lie here and don't eat and don't drink I won't last more than a few days...*

Soothing as it sounded, she couldn't. Guilt pressed down firm, reminding her of the promise she'd made. She dismissed the notion and inched towards the cupboard to look for coffee. It was time to wake up.

**Wednesday PM, July 29th**

Her third no-call no-show warranted a visit from the bar's owner, Ron Kent. He had to dig through years' worth of trash to find documentation of her employment; bogus though it was, it had her

real address printed on it.

He parked his car and eyed the building to get his bearings.

*'Course she lives all the way at the top*, he thought, irritation creasing his face.

His knees didn't like to climb stairs much, joints stiffened with years of alcoholism. By the time he reached the top he was in a foul mood. Muttering under his breath, he reached forward and knocked on the door, ready to unload on her. He'd rehearsed some if it in the car on his way over: stern frustration with a hint of disappointment for good measure.

It took her a moment to answer, peeling the door slowly back.

All his reprimands went out the window when he saw her. She was wearing a giant t-shirt, stained with what looked like vomit. Her eye was swollen shut, her body dappled heavily with cuts and bruises. She looked a good deal smaller and frailer than he'd ever seen; pale, limp with exhaustion.

Ron didn't say anything. His vaguely Clint Eastwood eyes squinted, cigarette clenched between his lips. He exhaled a strong jet of smoke from his nostrils.

Dana leaned against the door frame "You come here to fire me?" she asked matter-of-factly.

"I came because this in't like you," he answered in similar fashion. "And yer phone ain't workin'." He tucked his hands into his pockets. "What happened?"

"I unplugged it."

"Don't be a smart ass."

Dana shrugged jagged shoulders. "I got jumped on my way home Monday night."

"On yer way home from the bar?"

She nodded.

“You call the cops? Go to the hospital?”

“No.”

Ron took another puff. “Prolly fir the best,” he said. “Cops in this town ain’t worth a damn. Hospital’ll nickel n’ dime ya. Yer still young, you’ll heal up.”

There was a gap of silence between them. Ron smoked. Dana leaned.

“I can cover yer shifts fer ya,” he said finally. “Just lemme know when yer ready to come back.”

To the casual observer this might seem a fine and reasonable reaction. But coming from Ronald Kent, it was something akin to falling down on hands and knees and weeping inconsolably.

“Y’need anythin’?”

Dana didn’t quite know how to respond. Maybe in her normal state she’d have played it cool, sent him on his way untroubled. Now though, drained and delirious with hunger, she didn’t see the point in putting on airs.

“I haven’t really eaten...and I—I don’t wanna leave—like this.” She gestured at her face.

“I can get ya some grub. That all y’need?”

She thought a moment before answering. “Cigarettes.”

Later that night Ron returned with enough Chinese takeout to feed her for three days, two pints of ice cream, a carton of Lucky’s, and a six pack of Miller High Life.

Dana had been expecting something utilitarian; frozen dinners maybe, canned pasta. But from the bounty he brought it was clear he wasn’t merely trying to feed her; he was trying to comfort her. As he handed her the groceries, a familiar sob rose though her chest, gaining momentum as it neared her throat.

“Th—Thanks Ron,” was all she said.

He patted her shoulder awkwardly. “Glad yer ok, kiddo,” he mumbled, hobbling stiffly back down the stairs. He drove straight to the Alley Cat and poured himself his first drink in three years.

## **Thursday AM, July 31st**

She showered for first time since that night. She turned the water on and let it run, let the room steam up and obscure her sight. She lifted her shirt over her head, her body hazy through the mist, and stepped into the tub. She scrubbed herself as hard as she could without re-opening any wounds. By the end, the water that curled down the drain was only pink, not crimson.

### *Progress.*

With trembling hands, she wiped the fog from the mirror. She half-expected to see the clown’s frozen grin leering over her shoulder. But all that greeted her was her reflection, plenty disturbing on its own. The cuts on her face were closed but still stark against her paleness. She looked gaunt, chin and cheek bones sharpened. The swelling around her eye had gone down enough that she could almost open it. She tried, but stopped when she saw the black blood clouding her iris.

### *Jesus.*

The towel around her drooped. She let it fall. Her body was a map of assault. Bruises shaped like his hands. The skinned spots were easier to look at.

It wasn’t until she started to turn around that she felt real panic. She’d not forgotten his carved words. One way or another she had to read it; she had to know. Slowly, she looked over her shoulder.

It was the same crude script he’d used to deface her car. Backwards

in the mirror, it spanned the space between her shoulder blades. She had to lean in look close to read it, closer than she wanted to look.

*Henry...*

*Bower's...*

*...Whore.*

Bile leapt up her throat. She couldn't breathe suddenly, her lungs stiffening in her chest.

*Chill...you knew it was gonna suck...it's ok...you're ok...*

Dana sank to the ground, pulling the towel close for cover.

*Once it heals you can tattoo over it. You'll just cover it up—get a full back-piece. No one will ever know. It'll be like it was never there...*

Her own reassurances only made her cry harder.

## 22. So Tough

### Summary for the Chapter:

*He a had fun experience,  
Nothing he does ever makes sense  
He is only curious,  
Don't take it serious  
So tough,  
You can't take anymore now you're getting weak  
So tough,  
Don't start playing hide and seek  
So hard,  
Why do you think he got like that?  
So hard  
Don't think about it much 'cause it's just a rut*

### Notes for the Chapter:

Chapter title song by the Slits  
< 3

**The Slits....So Tough.**



**Thursday PM, July 31st**

Dana's breath hitched.

"Hello? Are you there?"

"Yeah sorry," she stammered.

"How can I help?" the woman asked softly.

"Um...I'm not sure...exactly..."



“Are you or is someone you know currently in danger?”

“I don’t think—no...”

“Good—that’s good. Can you tell me a little bit about why you called tonight?”

Dana swallowed. “I know someone who...I was...” The familiar feeling of a sob soaring up her throat made her stop. “Shit—sorry...”

“It’s alright,” she said. “May I ask your name?”

Dana hesitated. “Confidential right?”

“Absolutely.”

“Dana.”

“Take your time Dana. It’s ok.”

She took a deep breath and exhaled slowly through her mouth.

“I was attacked...I was raped.”

She thought saying it aloud might initiate relief of some sort. She felt none. She hated the way the words tasted, hated hearing her voice crack as she spoke them. It was a vocal confirmation, an ugly one. Speaking it—the word *rape*—as it now pertained to her.

“I’m so sorry Dana,” said the voice through the receiver.

“Yeah. Me too.”

“Did the assault happen recently or—”

“Couple days ago.”

Dana could almost hear her wince through the phone.

“I’m so sorry,” she said again. “Have you reported the assault to your local authorities?”

“...I can’t really do that.”

“You don’t feel comfortable doing it?”

“That’s one way to say it.”

“Would you feel better if someone went with you? Maybe you could ask a family member or friend or boyfriend?”

“I don’t have any of that,” Dana said stiffly. “I can’t go to the cops. It wouldn’t help.”

“When you say you don’t ‘have any of that,’ you mean friends, family?”

“Yeah.”

“You don’t have anyone who you can lean on for support?”

Dana sighed. “No...I mean my neighbor kinda. She knows. But she’s just a kid—she’s not—not really—”

“Not really a resource,” she finished.

“Right.”

“Can I ask you how you heard about the Women’s Crisis Hotline?”

“...I heard an ad on the radio.”

“I see.” The woman sighed. “I’m gonna ask you a couple of questions that might seem somewhat personal,” she began. “but I’m just trying to figure out the best course of action here—see which resources might benefit you the most. Is that alright with you?”

“Yeah, I guess.”

She cleared her throat. “Do you know the individual who assaulted you?”

“I know who he is.”

“Did you two have a relationship prior to the assault?”

“God no,” Dana said, stifling the urge to gag.

“Did you meet him through a mutual acquaintance? Through work?”

“He’s a fuckin’ kid—he’s a bully. He’s maybe—*maybe*—eighteen years old. We kinda got into it a few times. He vandalized my car—”

“Would you say you antagonized him?”

“The fuck—no!” Dana spat. “Jesus whose side are you on anyway?”

“I’m on your side Dana,” she insisted. “but in order to advise you to the best of my abilities I need to know how things escalated. Does that make sense?”

“...I guess.”

There was a pause.

“You say going to the police is out of the question for you. But I have to be honest, I really do think that’s your best option. There are advocates that can assist you and guide you through the process—”

“Look I can’t go to the cops because the guy who raped me is the sheriff’s kid and *the sheriff* made me suck him off in his cruiser when I was eighteen...so...yeah...wouldn’t really call them an ‘option’...”

She hadn’t expected to be so blunt, or to divulge so much. But it was easier somehow with a stranger; the stakes were low.

Soft static crackled through the phone.

“I see,” the woman said finally. “That is quite a...quite a situation.”

“No shit.”

“I—I’m not really sure how to—”

“Look, I know I’m fucked. I-I know there’s nothing I can do. I’m gonna leave town, eventually...”

“I think that would be in your best interest,” she agreed softly.

“I can’t leave yet—there’s some stuff I gotta take care of first. I just—I need to know how I can—I dunno...*function*? Until then?”

“How you can function?” she asked.

“Like...I’m scared all the time. I can’t leave my apartment.”

“What happens when you leave your apartment Dana?”

“I dunno. I haven’t made more than a few steps since...”

“Since the assault took place.”

“...yeah.”

“Can you tell me what happens when you try to leave your apartment?”

“Um...I can’t breathe. My heart races and I feel dizzy like—like I’m gonna pass out.”

“Sounds to me like an anxiety attack.”

Dana swallowed. “Ok...is there something I can do about that? Is there something that helps?”

“There are anti-anxiety medications that alleviate the symptoms of an attack at its onset. A psychiatrist can prescribe them. If you tell me who your insurance carrier is I can find out which psychiatrists in your area—”

“I don’t have insurance.”

“You’re not covered?”

“No.”

“Hmm...that makes things harder then...”

Dana closed her eyes. “I—it’s ok,” she stammered. “I shouldn’t have wasted your time.”

“Dana wait,” the woman said urgently. “Please don’t hang up. Are you still on the line? Dana?”

“...I’m still here.”

“Good,” she said. “Now, please understand, I’m only a volunteer. My job is to point you in the direction of resources, talk to you about your options, try to help you navigate this process.”

“Yeah, ok.”

“*But*,” she continued. “your situation is a little bit different. It’s—well it’s tricky. It sounds as though you don’t have much of a support system to lean on. You’re uninsured so therapy and medication aren’t options. And the picture you’ve painted me of your local law enforcement makes me inclined to agree with you that, yes, going to the authorities would not be in your best interest.”

“Well when you say it like that it sounds pretty bleak,” Dana mumbled.

“I agree it does, it does. *However*,” she went on. “while my job prohibits me from actually giving *advice* to callers, I can tell you that there was a time, not too long ago, where I found myself in a similar situation—not identical, obviously, but similar. And if you think it would benefit you, I can tell you what personal practices worked well for me. How does that sound to you?”

Shrugging, Dana wound the phone chord around her fingers. “Sure.”

## 23. The Wait

### Summary for the Chapter:

*Said the wait child magic child work it on out now work it*

*The wait child pinball child pool hall child hurts*

*The wait child pacing child forth back now hurts*

*The wait child neon light late night lights hurt*

*Oh gonna hurt some child child*

*Gonna hurt some whoa my baby*

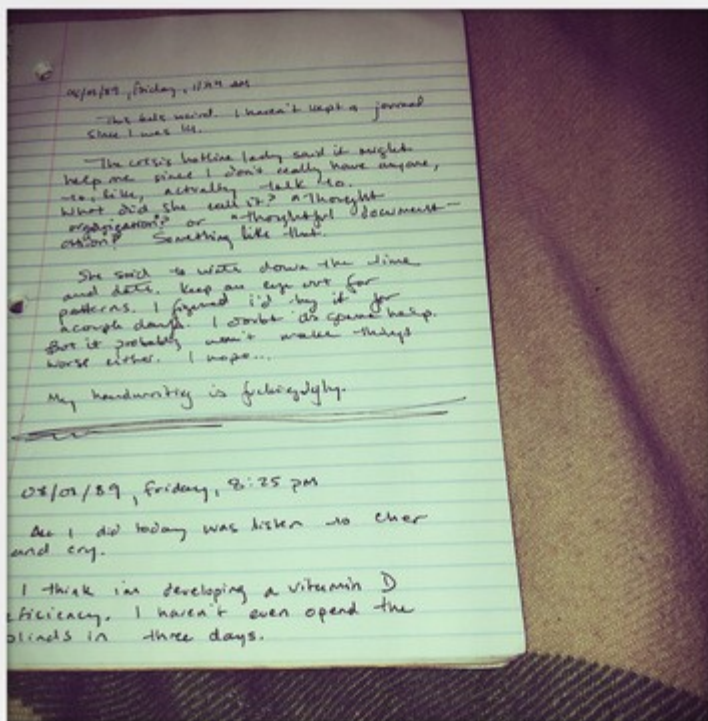
### Notes for the Chapter:

TW: very dark first-hand recalling of the aftermath of assault; depression

Thought I'd try out a different style for this chapter. I wanted the reader to get in Dana's head, feel her feelings straight from her. Hope it comes across well. Comments/kudos very appreciated <3

Chapter title song by the Pretenders

**The Pretenders - The wait**



08/01/89, Friday, 11:44 am

This feels weird. I haven't kept a journal since I was 14.

The crisis hotline lady said it might help since I don't really have anyone to, like, physically talk to. What did she call it? "thought organization" or "thought documentation"? Something like that. She said to write down the date and time. Keep an eye out for patterns. I figured I'd try it for a couple days. I doubt it's gonna help. But it probably won't make things worse either. I hope. My handwriting is fucking ugly.

08/01/89, Friday, 8:25 pm

*All I did today was listen to Cher and cry.*

*I think I'm developing a vitamin D deficiency. I haven't even opened the blinds in three days. Maybe tomorrow I'll try to go outside again. Just thinking about it makes me feel sick. God this is pathetic. I am so fucking pathetic Jesus Christ. I'm going to bed.*

*08/02/89, Saturday, 1:45 am*

*I dreamed someone had their hands around my throat. I woke up choking. My heart is still racing. I'm trying to get it to slow down. The hotline lady said breathing was important. I'm trying to take deep breaths. I'm trying but it's hard to get enough air. It's hard to write because my hands are shaking.*

*08/02/89, Saturday, 3:48 am*

*I keep jerking myself awake, short of breath, all sweaty. Maybe it's a good thing I slept so much the first few days cause I sure as hell am not getting any sleep tonight.*

*08/02/89, Saturday, 10:35 am*

*My eye could actually open all the way today. The white part still looks pretty gnarly. Red and blotchy. And my pupil is dilated weird and is super sensitive to light. I think it's alright though. I remember when dad got a black eye that one time it kinda looked the same. Like an opal. His healed ok.*

*Beverly stopped by. To "check on" me. She's a good kid. Still sad though. I don't feel great knowing she's worrying about me. She's got enough of her own shit to worry about. I wanna help. I wanna be there for her. I'm just not ready. Not yet. I'm getting there.*

*08/02/89, Saturday 5:45 pm*

*I am such a fucking idiot. I am a fucking moron. He could still have my keys. Any of them could. Fuck my fucking broken-ass brain. How did I*



*not think about this before? How did this not occur to me? I called the super today to tell him I need a new lock installed. He wasn't there. I had to leave a fucking a message. Fucking FUCK. What the fuck was I thinking? I don't know for a fact that they kept them but I know they weren't fucking there when I tried to get back in the bar that night. I can't fucking tell if that sick psycho fuck is done fucking with me. All I know is I gotta get that fucking lock changed just in case. The goddamn super better call me back. So fucking help me he just better call me back.*

*08/03/89, Sunday 5:15 am*

*Last night I ate the last of the take-out from Ron. I really stretched it. I know today I'm gonna have to leave to get food. I haven't been outside in five days. At some point I'm gonna see him. Or he's gonna see me. He knows where I work, where I live. This town is so small. I can't hide forever. But fuck. I'm fucking scared. I think I'm honestly more scared of him than I am of that fucking clown thing, whatever it is. How warped is that?*

*08/03/89, Sunday 6:40 am*

*I'm afraid I'll never be able to look at myself and not feel hate. When I talk all I can hear is what my voice sounded like when I begged him. When I look down at my body all I see is how fragile and disgusting it is.*

*It's confusing. Because, like, if I'm shit, then why does what they did make me so angry? I deserve it right? Who cares? I'm nothing. I'm a body. With holes. At least if someone's fucking me some pleasure is coming out of my existence. Jesus that's depressing. I think shit like this and then I hate myself even more because I know I'm giving them too much power. Every thought I have feels like the wrong one. I wish someone would just fucking tell me. Tell me how to feel.*

*I don't think what they did was about me. They could have done it to anyone. That's what makes me crazy, the thought of someone else going through that shit. Someone good. Someone loved by people who would cry and be broken when they found out. Maybe it's already happened. Maybe I'm not the first girl.*

08/03/89, Sunday 9:31 am

*I haven't gotten more than two consecutive hours of sleep in four days. The dreams wake me up and I have all this adrenaline. I decided to start taking power naps during the day and just say fuck it and not even bother trying to sleep at night. Been keeping the TV on mute while I listen to records. It makes me feel safer. I dunno why. Also been jamming a chair under the doorknob at night. Fucking wish my worthless goddamn super would return my call. I've left three messages about getting the locks changed.*

08/03/89, Sunday 5:58 pm

*I finally did it. Today. It was really hard. Getting down the steps was fucking treacherous. I thought I was gonna pass out and fall to my death. I had to keep stopping. I smoked two cigarettes on the way down. Not ideal but whatever. Once I made it to the bottom it got a little easier. I took back roads to the store which, in hind sight, probably wasn't smart because they're more isolated. But I wasn't thinking about that. I just figured I'd be less likely to run into anyone. I had an internal freak out in the market when the cashier asked me what happened to my face but I managed to pay and walk home without losing my cool. Once I got home I cried and smashed some shit, which I'm about to clean up. Then I'm gonna make this frozen pizza. And drink a fucking beer. I earned it.*

08/04/89, Monday 8:55 am

*The fucking super finally returned my call. He said he couldn't get a locksmith out until sometime late next week. I told him someone who hurt me had my key. I told him I didn't feel safe. He said he'd do the best he could and would call back when he talked to the locksmith. In other words, he told me to go fuck myself.*

08/04/89, Monday 1:32 pm

*I left the apartment again today to go to the hardware store to get a new chain latch for my door. It was a little easier than last time. I only freaked out once when I saw someone I thought was Henry. Once I realized it wasn't him I chilled out. I just installed the lock. It seems pretty sturdy.*

*Maybe I'll actually get some sleep tonight. Still haven't heard shit back about the locksmith. I left two more messages for the super today. I threatened to withhold rent. Maybe that'll get his attention. Fucking prick.*

*Think I'm gonna go back to work on Thursday. I'm starting to worry about money. I think it'll be ok. I look a lot better. Shit's healing really fast. I called Ron this morning to tell him. He sounded relieved. He told me Terry offered to start staying after close to drive me home til I can get my car fixed.*

*I can't believe it's been over a week since it happened. "It happened." Sounds fucking idiotic but I don't give shit. I don't wanna write it. Fuck that word. I fucking hate it.*

*08/04/89, Tuesday 7:20 am*

*I wanna skin them alive. All of them. I wanna cut their fucking dicks off. I wanna light them on fire and watch them burn. I want some fucking retribution. Is that too much to ask? Why does it have to be like this? Why do men think it's ok to treat women like shit over and over again? Why do we have to lay back and take it? The hotline lady was right. There is a pattern. And I wanna know why. I wanna know what it is about me that makes men look at me and want to hurt me. What did I do? What's wrong with me?*

*08/04/89, Tuesday 10:10 pm*

*I've never been afraid of the dark, always felt kinda at ease at night. In the dark it's easier to keep to yourself, to be hidden. It never occurred to me that it's easier for other things to hide too. I've been feeling it. I'm ok during the day but at night every sound makes me jump. I have to turn on all the lights and music and sit facing the door and like concentrate on it, on making sure that no one tries to come in. I sweep the apartment 3-4 times a night. I feel exposed.*

*Tonight I decided to try and go out after sundown. It was not easy. Just opening the door and letting the dark in felt fucking terrifying. I took main*

*streets to walk downtown. It was early, only nine. But it was fucking eerie. The square was like a ghost town. There were fliers up everywhere. They were blowing around the street. Like fucking tumbleweeds. There were a bunch of kids I didn't recognize from before. I swear to god, three kids have gone missing in eight days.*

*How is this shit not making national news? What the fuck is happening in the deranged fucking bubble of a town that is Derry fucking Maine? These kids are just vanishing. Young kids. Kids whose parents love them. I wish I could switch with just one of them. I deserve to go missing. But no, I'm still here, running around wasting space in this terrible world watching these poor kids drop like flies. And I don't know how to help. I guess all I can do is hang around and keep an eye on Beverly and her friends and hope that whatever is happening stops soon. Fuck. I want out of here so bad. But I can't just leave them with this. They're good kids. I owe them.*

## 24. Kerosene

### Summary for the Chapter:

*There's Kerosene around, something to do  
There's Kerosene around, she's something to do  
There's Kerosene around, she's something to do  
There's Kerosene around, we'll find something to do  
Kerosene around, she's something to do  
Kerosene around, set me on fire  
Set me on fire, Kerosene  
Set me on fire, Kerosene  
Set me on fire, Kerosene  
Set me on fire, Kerosene  
Set me on fire*

### Notes for the Chapter:

Tensions rise in the junkyard...

EDIT ALERT:

(moved this chapter so the timeline makes more sense. Basically i wanted it to be clear that this interaction happened around the same time Dana starts journaling.)

Lonng-ish Bowers Gang chapter! Hope ya'll enjoy. Comments/kudos greatly appreciated.

Chapter song title by Big Black (I used one of their songs already for a BowersGang-heavy chapter. This one in particular always makes me think of Patrick, for obvious reasons. in general tho, I think they're the band I most strongly associate w/ them. feel free to give them a listen and lmk what you think :))

**Big Black - Kerosene**



24.

Patrick wrinkled his nose, snout tugged up into a sneer as though he'd tasted something rotten. But the beer didn't taste any worse than normal. This sort of scowl had become his resting face since the night in the parking lot. His resentment festered like an unclean wound. Even a trip to the junkyard did nothing to soothe him. He'd gone hours before the others, in the hopes of burning through some of his

‘feelings.’

A couple of the live traps he'd laid the week before had animals waiting for him when he arrived: two squirrels and a small rabbit. Judging by how sluggish they were they'd been there a few days. The rabbit was his first subject. It got the worst of it. He tortured the poor animal with rabid cruelty, so eager for release. When he'd finished with it there were pieces scattered within a ten-foot radius. Its head and skull were bashed flat, brains smeared gray across the trunk of a nearby beater. It entertained him. But it was by no means the catharsis he needed. He dismembered the first squirrel with lackluster enthusiasm. By the time he got to the third he was all but dreading the hassle of it.

It squirmed feebly in his hands.

*Why fuckin' bother*, he thought.

It took a bite from the animal to jolt him out of his funk. He heaved it against a tree and gave it one hard stomp when it landed, paralyzed and twitching. Gore gushed over his boot. He didn't feel any different. Growling, he looked for something to wipe it. He was dragging his foot through the grass, muttering curses under his breath, when he heard the others approach.

“Hell you doin’ Hocksetter?” Belch had asked, eyebrow spiked.

“Stepped in something,” he said. He looked at Belch and Victor and frowned. “The fuck’s Henry?”

“He’s gonna be late. Said we could start without him.”

Patrick shot-gunned his first beer. He'd emptied two more before the hour was over in the hopes alcohol might improve his mood. Everything made his blood boil; even the slightest irritation was a tally on the wall of his patience. It annoyed him that the beer wasn't very cold. It annoyed him that Belch insisted on blaring his Judas Priest tape even though Patrick had clearly voiced his preference for

Motorhead. It annoyed him that Vic was kind of stoned and kept laughing at things that weren't funny. It annoyed him that both Vic and Belch, despite being high and buzzed, seemed oddly somber.

It was Vic, having always been the most intuitive of the group, who first noticed Patrick's sour mood. "What's up *your* ass?" he asked, not bothering to look up from the joint he was rolling.

Patrick shot him a look. "Funny, I was gonna ask you guys the same thing..."

Belch popped the cap off another beer. "Whaddaya' mean?"

"You tell me."

"You're the one actin' weird," Vic insisted.

Patrick sneered. "Please—you two been walkin' around all week lookin' like you shit the bed."

Belch and Vic exchanged looks.

"Tell me I'm wrong."

Belch tightened his grip on his beer bottle. He looked down.

"You been feelin' guilty about somethin'?" Patrick asked, smirking. The two of them shifted uncomfortably.

Belch hesitated. "Well," he began. "maybe we have been kinda worried bout'...well...ya know..."

Patrick played dumb, head cocked to the side, eyebrow raised.

"Ya know... bout' what we did n' all...to that girl. Mean...what if she goes to the cops?"

Patrick rolled his eyes and waved a dismissive hand. "She won't."

"What if she does?"

"I'm tellin' you it ain't gonna happen."



"But if she *does*," Vic interrupted. "we're fucked. We'd be lookin' at jail. *All* of us." He twisted the joint between his fingers.

Patrick scoffed. "Ya'll are still minors dipshit. Me and Henry are the ones who'd be fucked, we ain't worried."

"Maybe you should be," Vic said. "I mean, we were all there Hockstetter. If she tells anyone—"

"If she was gonna tell we all woulda had cops knocking on our doors by now. Besides," he went on. "it's been three days. You think she ain't showered? DNA's gone. Even if she went to the cops, most they could pinch us for is aggravated assault."

"That's still a big deal," Vic said quietly.

"That's nothin'—that's a slap on the wrist—maybe a restraining order or some bullshit. Jesus," Patrick squinted at them in disgust. "when did you two turn into such fuckin' pussies?"

"You're tellin' me you ain't worried at all?" Vic demanded.

"Can't say that I am."

"Then why you been actin' funny?"

Patrick fell silent. He ripped a pack of Camels from his back pocket, flicked his lighter open.

Vic studied him a moment. Then it dawned on him. "You still pissed Henry wouldn't let you fuck her?"

Patrick raised his eyes to the boy. Rancor pulsed through the pale green irises. "He don't *let* me do nothin'," he hissed, venomous. "I'd a'broke that bitch in half if I'd a'wanted to."

"Seemed to me like you did wanna," Vic said. Normally Patrick's unpredictability made him wary to mouth off, but the substances in his system argued logic.

Patrick exhaled hard, smoke streaming from his flared nostrils. "Ain't about her," he said. "it's about *him*. He thinks he can do whatever he

wants. Big man in charge.”

Belch narrowed his eyes. “It weren’t up to you. That bitch insulted Henry. It was *his* fight.”

Patrick cackled. “Christ—you’re so far up his ass I’m surprised you can breathe.”

“You watch your fuckin’ mouth!” Belch stood, ready to rush him, but Vic was quick enough to get between them.

“That wasn’t a *fight*,” Patrick continued, voice sing-song-y with contempt. “That shit wasn’t payback. If he’d a’wanted pay back he woulda asked me to set the bitches house on fire. He didn’t wanna fight her. He wanted to *fuck* her. Only time he even hit her was to tire her out so we could hold her down. I mean shit—if the whole thing had been ‘bout gettin’ even with the bitch, don’t you think it woulda been more effective if we’d *all* fucked her?” He raked his tongue over his canines.

“You’re way off,” Vic said. “You’re just pissed you didn’t get a turn.”

“And you aren’t? I seen the way you were lookin’ at her Vicki—you wanted it just as bad as I did—you were just too chicken-shit to try it.”

“I weren’t your call,” Belch huffed. “She disrespected Henry, not us. *He’s* the one had to set that bitch straight.”

Patrick brought a pointed finger to his chin, puckered his lips and pretended to think. “Funny,” he said. “from what I remember you weren’t exactly around to see what happened. Far as I recall Henry sent you to keep watch...cause’ you looked like you were gonna cry...”

Belch’s face looked like a tomato, waxy-red and bloated. “You lied to me Hockstetter!” he yelled. “You said we was gonna scare her, not fuckin’ rape her!”

“I said what Henry told me to say,” Patrick lied. “He knew you wouldn’t be able to handle it—he knew it was gonna fuck you up—but he didn’t care. Long as he got to get his dick wet.”

"I'm warnin' you man..." Belch's thick cheeks vibrated through his jaw.

"Fuckin' relax Reg," Patrick purred. "we're on the same side."

"I ain't on your side."

Patrick leaned towards him. Daring him—begging him—to strike. Vic was between them still, palm to Belch's chest, halting him. The color drained from his face as it did when something caught him off guard. The three stood locked in standoff, so soaked in the intensity of their exchange that not one of them noticed Henry approaching from the southern side of the yard.

"Hell's goin' on here?"

Startled, Belch demurred. His shoulders drooped and he backed up next to Vic. Patrick turned slowly, cocking his eyes at Henry.

"N-nothing Henry," Vic stammered. Always the peacemaker.

"Don't look like nothin'." Henry walked slowly towards the group, calm but leery. "You wanna share with the rest of the class?"

The question floated between the three boys, bouncing invisibly from one to the next like a pinball. Belch looked guilty. Vic, worried. Patrick on the other hand was, quite visibly, annoyed. The sneer on his face only sharpened under Henry's scrutiny. It was enough of a tell to catch his attention.

"You got somethin' to say Hockstetter?" he asked, pale eyes studying the taller boy.

Patrick stared back at him, eyes pinched between slivered lids. "Somethin' to say?"

"You been sulkin' all week. Pretty fuckin' annoying actually," he said coldly. "You got a problem you oughta grow a pair and say it outright. Otherwise get the fuck over it."

"Well, since you brought it up—"

“Don’t beat around the fuckin’ bush neither. Be a big boy.”

So this was how it was going to be. Patrick was caught off guard by Henry’s aggression, but eager to return it.

“Ok Henry,” he said slowly. “truth is I got a problem. I got a problem with you, thinkin’ it’s ok to go back on your word.”

An eerie smile tugged at Henry’s lips. “You’re a broken fuckin’ record you know that?”

“You’re the one askin’.”

“It’s fuckin’ sad Hockstetter,” Henry continued, taking another step towards him. “fuckin’ pathetic, that I had to coax this shit outta you.”

“*Pathetic?* You’re callin’ *me* pathetic? ” His eyes bulged. “You been by her place lately Hank?” he asked mockingly. “You still watch her *sleep?*”

Henry’s visage clouded noticeably. “The fuck do you think you are?” he said, more warning than question.

Belch and Vic took it as cue to retreat lest they get caught in the crossfire.

“Who do you think *you* are that you can fuckin’ make rules up as you go?”

“I ain’t never heard no complaints til right the fuck now. So why don’t you cut the bullshit yeah? This ain’t about me.”

“Not *about* you?” Patrick’s jaw stretched open. He looked like a snake swallowing a mouse whole. “Do you hear yourself?”

“It *ain’t* about me. It’s about you. And you can play it off all you want. Truth is you grew up with a silver fuckin’ spoon in your mouth and we all know it. You’re spoiled Hockstetter. You don’t get what you want, you throw a fuckin’ tantrum.”

“You’re one to talk!” Patrick spat, laughing. “You fuckin’ hypocrite! You told me we’d all take turns—you *told me* you’d share!”

“And I changed my fuckin’ mind. Get over it.”

“I’ll get over it,” he countered, taking a step in Henry’s direction. “when I get what I’m owed.”

Henry furrowed his brow. “*Owed?*” The word was foreign to him. “*Owed?*”

At this, Vic intervened. “Come on guys,” he said, stepping nervously forward. “everyone’s on edge. Let’s smoke a couple’a joints and—”

“Shut up Criss,” Henry ordered, eyes glued to Patrick. “Mind tellin’ me exactly what you mean by ‘owed,’ Hockstetter?”

Patrick’s lips flattened against his teeth. He shrugged. “Means I want you to hold up your end. That bitch chipped my fuckin’ tooth,” he said. He opened his mouth, tapped on his canine. “I want you to make good on your word. I wanna fuck her—I fuckin’ earned it—”

“No.” Henry cut him off simply.

“*No?*”

“No.” He repeated.

Patrick’s eyes bulged. “Just like that, huh? Just—just ‘no,’ just like that?”

“Yeah just like that. And maybe this time you’ll hear me ‘cause I ain’t tellin’ you again.” Henry stepped closer, shoulders back, lean arms tensed. “Hands. Off.”

Patrick was silent. His brain cycled through waves of indignation, anger, confusion. He couldn’t wrap his head around it. Henry’s possessiveness of this girl—who he *hated*—was totally arbitrary, utterly *irrational*. Unless...

*Unless...holy shit...*

A devious smile split Patrick’s face. His lips buckled and laughter croaked from his throat; the smug laugh of someone with a secret.

Henry's eyes flashed over him. "Fuck's so funny?"

Patrick shook his head, wheezing. "Ohh *maaaan*..."

"What're you laughin' at?"

Patrick wrinkled his nose in delight and looked down.

"I'm talkin' to you Hockstetter," Henry growled, advancing. "The fuck's so funny?"

And Patrick looked up only with his eyes. "You *like* her..."

Henry froze.

It was all the confirmation Patrick needed. His smile widened, tongue flicking across his bottom lip. "Oh my *God*." He pinched his eyes shut to savor the sweet perfection of his epiphany. "Now it all makes sense! You actually fuckin' *like* her—"

"Shut up," Henry cautioned. He looked down, eyes darting wildly over the same square foot of ground.

Patrick laughed again, hard and mocking, loud enough to spook blackbirds from the trees nearby.

"Enough Hocksetter," Belch roared. "Henry don't like that bitch! I ain't never seen nobody get under his skin like that fuckin' skank." But poor Belch, bless his heart, was only digging Henry's hole deeper. And Patrick knew it.

"And why do you think that is, *huh?* Why do you think he *cares* what she thinks? Because he likes her. Don'tcha' Henry?"

"Shut up Pat. Fuckin' serious."

But there was no stopping now. The flame was lit, and Patrick wanted to watch it burn.

"You honestly think you got a chance with this chick? After *everything?* I mean—*Jesus* fuckin' *Christ* Hank! If she didn't want you

before you fuckin' raped 'er you really think she's gonna—"

He didn't see it coming, too busy taunting to notice a switch had flipped. In a second he was on his back. Pain spun through his jaw. When he tried to sit up he was met with another blow: a starchy 'pop' from the bridge of his nose and his face flooded with warmth. He opened his eyes and Henry was on top of him, panting in grunt. His fist was cocked, eyelids stretched past the white.

As he stared up at him, Patrick couldn't help but grin again. "You been watchin' too many chick flicks. You think she's gonna be your *girlfriend* you're fuckin' craziern' I am—"

Another 'thud' as Henry's fist met his temple. It took Belch and Vic's best effort to tear him off. When they'd calmed him enough to let go Patrick sat up, half choking, half laughing.

Henry's mania dissolved as abruptly as it came on. His face had regained its color; his body stood stiffly calm.

Patrick cupped his hand to his nose to catch the blood. "She must really be somethin' huh? Pussy that good, might have to see for myself," he rasped wickedly.

"You don't know shit Hockstetter. But fuckin' know this: that bitch is *mine*. You better get that through your thick skull. 'Til then I don't wanna see you 'round." Patrick's cigarettes had fallen from his pocket in the scuttle. Henry kicked the crushed pack towards him, launching a cloud of dust into his face in the process. "Get the fuck outta here."

Sneering, Patrick shot out his hand, snatched up the pack, and sauntered off toward the woods.

---

Tonight, Patrick would snort coke. He spilled the contents of the tiny

bag across his tabletop, tapping a razor blade through it to break the dry clumps. It had been a minute.

It wasn't easy to find cocaine in Derry. Weed was fairly accessible and meth was abundant in the lower income neighborhoods. But cocaine was rare, and *good* coke was almost non existent. Even if you did manage to track down a gram or two there was really no way of knowing what you were actually getting; could be meth, could be heroine, could be baby laxatives.

But Patrick had found a way to bypass the confusion. He had a connection—in all likelihood the *only* coke connection in all of Derry. It was a totally serendipitous discovery; one Patrick had taken full advantage of since he'd stumbled upon the source two years prior. On the night of his father's 40th birthday his mother had insisted that they go out to dinner at the swankiest restaurant in town, a French bistro on Pine Street called *Les Amis*. Bored and repulsed by the soft cheeses and fruity salads, Patrick excused himself and went out back to smoke a cigarette. It was there that he met a man named Claudio. Claudio worked as a line cook at *Les Amis*, and happened to Columbian. Patrick bummed him a cigarette. The two got to talking. By the end of their five-minute conversation Patrick walked away \$60 lighter, with a tiny ziplock of white powder folded into his pocket. And so blossomed a lucrative friendship. Through Claudio Patrick gained access to the purest powdered drugs in New England, and once he had his foot in the door, other avenues began to present themselves as well. Before long he knew where to find pretty much any drug he wanted: prescription amphetamines and barbiturates, benzos, narcotics, you name it.

The ingestion and dispersion of substances provided Patrick with a hobby, an entirely new well of knowledge to master, and added income. Not that he needed the money; his parents handed him cash at the bat of an eye. But there was something pleasing to him about having his own secret empire of wealth, stashed away just in case.

Motorhead blasted from his stereo speakers. He'd already prepared a \$20 bill, rolled into a neat tube. He held one end to his nose and brought his head to the table, neck angled uncomfortably. He sucked the powder up through his nostril, rubbing the remnants into his gums when he'd finished. The bitter drip settled into the back of his



throat. His heart beat in quick bursts; like a frightened bird was trapped in his ribcage. Now, at least, his body and his brain were synched; he could focus.

This had certainly been an interesting afternoon.

*Illuminating, to say the least...*

He'd had the walk home to be with his anger. But now was not the time to ruminate. This newly-garnered knowledge had given him all the answers he needed. It was quite simple really. At the end of the day it all came down to *priorities*. Henry had made it quite clear that *his* priority was Dana. To what end, Patrick still wan't entirely sure. Some sort of autonomous possession was heavily implied, but that could mean anything from going steady to keeping her chained in his basement. He'd used Belch and Vic and even Patrick as tools to attain her the first time, but clearly this wasn't a one-and-done situation.

Patrick's own agenda was different. He couldn't have given less of a shit about Dana on a personal level. Sure she was hot—alluring even—in an aloof sorta way. But that's not why he wanted to fuck her. He'd wanted her, at first, because Henry had his sights set on her. Patrick had a habit of reaching for what wasn't his, but he'd always had the good sense not to try and take something that Henry had already claimed. This time was different. It was different because of Patrick's number one priority: the infliction of pain onto others. And here was a perfect opportunity to induce maximum suffering. This girl was an ideal target because she'd already been beaten down, traumatized, isolated. And still somehow she had fire in her, just begging to be stomped out. Better still, fucking her would take Henry down a peg or two. Patrick wondered what he might do if and when he found out. Now *that* promised to be an interesting day...

*Easier to ask forgiveness than permission...*

Patrick turned the music up and laid back into his pillows. He grinned, tongue scouring his gums for any coke he might have missed. He knew he wouldn't sleep tonight. His legs jittered and his mind raced with depravity.